What is Essential?

George Arthur Andrews

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BY

GEORGE ARTHUR ANDREWS

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Preface

WO travelers were one day occupying the same seat in a railway train. One of them was a very youthful student of the "New Theology." The other was a confirmed Roman Catholic. As the two journeyed they fell into conversation, and soon from matters inconsequential they passed to a serious consideration of the nature of the Christian religion.

The discussion waxed long and eloquent, but it ended precisely where it began. The "New Theologian" left the car convinced that the Catholic was a hopeless bigot, while the Catholic departed in full assurance that the "New Theologian" was a willful heretic. Yet both men were followers of the same Christ. The inability to understand each other was due solely to the different view points from which they interpreted the religion of Christ.

Herein lies the reason for the prevalence of

seemingly contradictory conceptions concerning the nature of the Christian religion,—in unsympathetic view points. The view points of the traditionalist and of the rationalist, of the Catholic and of the Protestant, of the conservative and of the radical, of the conformist and of the independent, of the seer and of the doer,—these view points are mutually exclusive. Therefore the conceptions derived from the view points appear at times hopelessly at variance.

And herein lies the reason for an inquiry concerning the essentials of our religion,—in the need, among the variety of changing and contradictory conceptions of religion, for the discernment of that which is necessarily involved in its nature. This is the object of our search, the elemental, the vital, the very essence of the religion of Christ.

This little book is more of an inquiry than an answer. It is a suggestion and not an assertion. It will be some time before the very bed-rock bottom of the essence of our religion is reached by the inquiring mind. Perhaps it can never be

reached. Be that as it may, here the attempt is to make but a few soundings, in the hope that some human craft, perhaps in danger of religious shipwreck, may be piloted amid the dangers of unsatisfying speculations to a place of firm anchorage.

The author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to those friends who have helped him in his work by the criticism of his manuscript. Especially does he wish to thank Professor William Newton Clarke of Colgate University, for valuable literary and theological suggestions.

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What is Essential?

CHAPTER FIRST

Who is the Essential Christian?

Sec. 1. *The Ascetic Conception*

N English writer a few years ago attempted to describe the follower of Christ in a novel which he called "The Christian." The title was a misnomer. The stern, joyless, fanatical John Storm was no more like the Christian than John the Baptist was like Jesus Christ. But in fashioning his hero after the likeness of Christ's forerunner instead of in the likeness of Christ himself, Hall Caine was but following a custom which has been more or less prevalent for nearly twenty centuries.

It is indeed true that modern asceticism is of a much milder type than that which characterized mediæval Christianity. At first sight, it may seem that the family man, who to-day denies himself meat only on Fridays, can claim very

little resemblance to the man of the past centuries, who on all the days of his companionless existence partook only of bread and water. But though the practice of self-denial is now somewhat less rigorous, the motive for the self-denial is too often fundamentally the same. It is a self-denial which has its purpose only in a form of selfishness. The celibate monk lived on bread and water not for any good that his abstinence might bring to others, but only for the eternal good he hoped to attain for himself. All abstinences for like purposes must be likewise characterized. They are selfish, and selfishness in any form is unchristian.

Yet the ascetic type of the Christian is with us wherever we turn. There are men and women everywhere who separate themselves from so-called worldly indulgences and amusements, who are wont to practice only the passive virtues and to obey only the prohibitive commandments. Their motive is the same as that which prompted the monastic to deny himself domestic felicity and physical sustenance. They deny themselves now in order that by and by

they may save themselves. So prevalent even to-day is this ascetic conception of Christianity which has its motive in self-seeking, that we find preachers and evangelists still urging men and women to forego certain social amusements and personal indulgences for fear of what will happen to them if they do not, or for the reward that may come to them if they do. Young people, when asked to avow the life of Christ, inevitably inquire first what they must give up to be Christians, and too often are they taught to weigh the cost of a demanded denial only against the value of a promised reward. "You must give up this or that self-indulgence and pleasure," they are told, "but you will obtain in return peace in this world and in the world to come eternal life."

Now, if the one purpose of the Christian life were to save one's self, this ascetic conception of Christian living would be tenable. Assuming this purpose, monasteries and nunneries would follow as the legitimate and logical consequences, and the mortification of the flesh would become indeed an admirable virtue. If

personal salvation into heaven be the one supreme purpose of the Christian religion, not only must we highly commend the "Christian" of Mr. Caine's imagination, but also must we commend all living Christians who have denied themselves any pleasure of this world in order that they may attain the bliss of the world to come.

But this selfish object is not and cannot be the purpose of the true follower of the unselfish Christ. Personal salvation is only one of the results of Christian living,—never its purpose. He who would save his life must lose it, said Jesus. And the only way to attain salvation, he declared, was not to seek it as an end in itself, but to find it as a by-product of self-forgetful service.

One may be an ascetic and still be a Christian, but his asceticism does not make him a Christian. The essence of Christianity does not lie in the self-denial of him who hopes thereby to gain something more desirable for himself. One cannot condemn another for such self-denial. It is every man's privilege to forego a

pleasure to-day for the enjoyment of an anticipated greater pleasure to-morrow. We all do that, but we do it because we are prudent,—not because we are Christians.

The Christian virtue of self-denial is the denial of self for the sake of the welfare of someone else. Only such self-denial should be dignified by the name of sacrifice. Only such can properly be said to inhere in essential Christianity.

Sec. 2. *The Conformist Conception*

A man of a somewhat cynical turn of mind once made the statement that so far as he had observed, Christianity was but another name for conformity. By this remark he evidently meant to assert that the Christian profession was not a matter of inner principles but of outer practices.

He had observed, it may be, that those who had professed to be followers of Christ and those who had made no such profession were apparently actuated by the same life-purposes. He doubtless had seen professed Christians who were quick-tempered and unforgiving. He had

seen those who were proud and arrogant, opinionated and bigoted. He had seen professed Christians in business who manifested a selfish and grasping disposition, perhaps even those who stooped to base and immoral methods to increase their personal profit.

It is possible that he had observed that professed Christians, even in their organized Christian activities, were not always actuated by the spirit of humility and of gentle forbearance. It is barely conceivable that he had seen church members wrangling for positions of honor in the very Church of God, and quarreling with their brethren in Christ over matters of personal opinion and of personal preference.

Yet this man had likewise observed that all these proud, bigoted, selfish, quarreling Christians were conformists. They practiced certain Christian forms and participated in certain Christian ceremonies. For instance, they went to church on Sunday morning. They repeated together certain formulas and articles of faith. They bowed reverently during public prayer. In some churches they responded audibly to the

prayers with commendable fervency. They listened politely to the rhetorical sentences of cultured preachers. But after the weekly service was over they went back to their homes to take up again their schemes of business and political trickery, or to renew their struggle for social supremacy.

Though this picture is happily somewhat overdrawn, the man is perhaps excusable for his cynical inference. In these days of the popularity of the Christian religion, conformity to accepted Christian customs has become indeed a serious menace to vital Christianity. There is no temptation more insidious than the temptation to allow the habitual to become the formal. The acts which we perform with recurrent regularity are always those acts which are in most danger of losing their vitality. This is true whether the acts in their significance be domestic, industrial, social or religious. The home-maker is in danger from the treadmill of routine. The clerk in the office is in imminent peril of becoming a lifeless machine. The lady on her customary round of social calls

is extremely liable to make the calls in a listless and perfunctory manner. We need not, therefore, be surprised if the Christian in his recurrent religious duties is in danger of deteriorating into a formalist.

For indeed the expression of the Christian life, as well as the expression of any other phase of human life, demands its routine of duties. There must be Christian habits as well as business and social habits. The habitual conformist to accepted Christian customs is no more to be condemned than he who conforms his business methods to the conventional business customs of his day.

But when thus we admit the necessity for regular Christian customs and therefore the advisability of habitual Christian conformity, we do not therefore admit the necessity of a loss to Christian vitality. In the recurrent Christian ceremonies there is indeed danger of such a loss; sadly must we confess that many in their conformity have seemed to meet with loss; but the loss is not necessary. When a man goes to his habitual business equipped with the purpose

that through the daily routine he will attain success, his conformity to business customs will not endanger his business achievement. So when a man is determined to let recurrent Christian observances be to him an expression of his purpose to succeed in Christian living, that man is in no serious danger of losing the vitality of his religion.

Our cynical friend, then, was wrong in his excusable inference. Christianity is not conformity. At its worst, conformity may become a substitute for Christianity. At its very best, it can only be considered as one expression of Christianity. No man is a Christian because he conforms to prescribed Christian customs. If he does conform, it must be only because through the habitual participation in Christian observances he hopes the better to succeed in Christian living.

Sec. 3. "*Back to Christ*"

A decade or more ago the cry "Back to Christ" became the shibboleth of many Christian thinkers, some of whom were possessed of

temperaments distinctly iconoclastic. As used by these the cry became the signal for the attempted disparagement of historic Christianity. The extremists of this type of thinkers would allow no necessary growth from the seed planted by Jesus. They insisted that his religion must be considered as having sprung from him full grown and completely armed, just as Pallas Athene is fabled to have sprung from the head of Zeus. Of course, no writer said exactly this in words, but this is a logical inference from their destructive assertions.

When we demand that the Christian of to-day shall be no different from the contemporary follower of the historic Jesus of Nazareth, we make the demand that Christianity of all of God's forces shall be the only force which shall not be subject to His universal law of development. When we make this one exception for our religion, we make of our religion the one thing in all God's world which is not only unnatural but which is inert and lifeless. If Christianity be a living thing, it must be a

growing thing. If it be divine, it must be capable of development.

The cry "Back to Christ" when taken thus to preclude all development from Christ, would lead us to illogical and impossible conclusions, and to most absurd practices. "Back to Christ" would be back to Jewry. If we should do exactly as Christ did, not only should we travel bareheaded and clothe our feet in sandals, but we should observe the Jewish Sabbath, and worship in the synagogue. We should have for our sacred books only the Law and the Prophets, for "Back to Christ" literally interpreted involves the loss to us of the religious value of all the books of the New Testament, except indeed the biographies contained in the Gospels. If we should go back to Christ in this literal sense, we should go back of the Church, back of all forms of organized Christianity, back of all attempts at systematic Christian teaching, back to a time of an uncoordinated individualism, from which, deprived of its organized and historic development, there would result only anarchy and chaos.

But, fortunately, we cannot thus go back to him. Try as hard as we may, we cannot take the fruit of two thousand years of Christian growth and make of it only the seed from which the fruit has developed. We cannot do that, any more than we can cause the apple in our hand to dwindle to the tiny black seed which held the germ of the apple's life. We may not claim that the fruit of Christianity is yet fully grown. The apple may be small and unripe, but it is nevertheless something different from its germinal seed, something different and something more. That is because it is the fruition of a living germ, and both the germ and the process of growth are divine.

Yet "Back to Christ" in a sense we must all go for our conception of his religion. Back to him, not for the fruit of Christianity, but for its germ. Back to him must we go for the eternal life-giving principle which, through the sunlight of God's favor and the raindrops of the tears of many sacrifices, has grown until it has civilized nations, aye, and which shall grow until "all the kingdoms of the world have be-

come the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

For though we must expect our fundamental Christianity of to-day to be something other and more than the Christianity of two thousand years ago, there can be in our developed and developing religion only that whose embryo was in Christ. The germinal seed of our Christian religion is Christ himself. It is not any teaching of Christ, much less is it any doctrine about Christ, but Christ in his very life and character. All, therefore, that inheres in the essential nature of Christianity must have its origin in Christ and must find its expression in a likeness to Christ. When we have understood what likeness to Christ involves in our present day, we have understood the very essence of Christianity. When we have applied that knowledge to our own lives, we have become Christians.

Sec. 4. *The Imitation of Jesus*

Some attempt to imitate Christ has never been absent from historic Christianity. Too often,

however, the imitation of him has been literal instead of spiritual, an imitation of the human setting of his life instead of an appropriation of the divine spirit that was within him.

Jesus was poor, so certain monks took upon themselves the vow of poverty. Jesus never married, so churchmen became celibates. Jesus washed his disciples' feet, so the Pope annually washes the feet of twelve dirty beggars. Jesus was baptized in early manhood, and we have a whole denomination who make adult baptism the basis of their denominational separation. Jesus is reported to have healed the sick with the touch of his hand, and behold we are surrounded by myriads of quack practitioners, Christian Scientists and faith-healers, who deny the efficacy of every other school of healing but their own, and who eschew all the remedies provided in God's world and discovered by God's children.

Jesus shared the popular beliefs of his day. He believed in demonology, in the existence of a personal devil, and in the control of human individuals by the devil's emissaries. There-

fore we have a page in the history of our own country sullied by the superstition of witchcraft. Therefore, too, we have even to this present day those who persist in attributing the deviltry of their own meannesses to the subjugation of an omnipotent arch enemy of the omnipotent God.

But no attempt to imitate the exact things which Jesus did, or to share his first-century beliefs, can be called essentially Christian, for none are in very essence Christlike. The reality of my likeness to my great-grandfather does not consist in my wearing knee breeches and adorning my head with a peruke. Nor does it consist in my refusal to accept the verities of science which have been demonstrated since his day. I am like my ancestor because in me there is something of the spirit that was in him, because I can appreciate his ideals and life-purpose, because I have like aspirations and similar methods of endeavor. But my aspirations and my methods of work I must apply to twentieth-century conditions. The very development of the Christian religion

has so modified and ennobled the conditions of life that no man can claim to be Christlike to-day who does only what Jesus did twenty centuries ago. To be like Christ, he must apply the spirit of Christ to the century in which he himself is living.

Some unsatisfactory attempts have been made of late years to imagine what Christ would be like if he should come to Chicago or to Boston. The simple truth is, that in such an instance Christ would outwardly be much like the ordinary American citizen of to-day. He would believe the truths of the twentieth century just as in his time he believed the truths of the first century. He would accept the conclusions of modern science. He would use the help of modern discoveries. The motive of his life would be the same; its manner of expression would be different. He would still alleviate human suffering, he might even cure the sick, but probably he would do it to-day by the application of a knowledge of physiology, psychology and hygiene rather than by the performance of miracles. He would still forgive

sin, but he would not appear to explain sin as the work of a personal devil.

If Christ should come to America to-day he would not be crucified, nor would he be put to death by any more modern and refined method of capital punishment. He would not be put to death at all. He would not suffer even the martyrdom of active hatred. He would suffer to-day from passive indifference. Nowhere in all the length and breadth of this tolerant land would men pick up stones to cast at him, but many would pass him by with averted faces in their selfish pursuit of pleasure and of profit.

Here, too, in the sufferings of Christ must we separate the essential, eternal element from the form in which it was clothed in the age in which he lived. It was not the Roman cross which made Christ suffer; it was the sin of the people which brought him to the cross. It was not the hatred of his followers which made him a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; it was the selfishness which caused them to hate him who was pure and loving. He would have

"gathered them to himself" and they "would not." That unwillingness of selfishness caused the cross in the first century. In the twentieth century it would cause only indifference. But the suffering of the Savior would be the same so long as men "would not."

Imagining thus a different setting to the life of Christ, though our imagination must prove hopelessly inadequate, we nevertheless find help in differentiating the actual experiences of Jesus from the essential spirit which actuated him. Thus, the actual poverty of his condition was incidental because he happened to be born into the family of a poor carpenter; but his humility of spirit was essential. His baptism by John in the Jordan was incidental, the mode of his consecration being determined by the time and the place; but the purpose of his baptism, to manifest his consecration to his life-work, was essential. The form in which temptation was presented to him was incidental; the power to resist, essential. The method of his ministry was occasioned by the times in which he lived, the miracles, therefore,

may be considered incidental; but the loving purpose of the ministry was essential. So, the physical suffering of the tragedy of Calvary was incidental, occasioned by the malignant hatred of the scribes and Pharisees and the cruel cowardice of a self-seeking Roman governor; but the spiritual suffering, sorrow for unrepentant sinners, was essential.

To be like Christ, then, is to be humble in spirit, to be consecrated to service, to be strong to resist temptations, to be patient and sympathetic in ministry, and to be sorry for unrepentant sinners. These Christlike qualities the Christian of to-day must apply to the conditions of to-day.

The possession of these qualities will lead him to self-denial, but the self-denial will be for the purpose of helping others instead of saving himself.

The possession of these qualities will presumably lead him into conformity with some prevalent type of Christian observance, a conformity wherein he may publicly acknowledge his consecration to service, and whereby he

may make his service as efficacious as possible. But his conformity will be an expression of his Christlikeness. It cannot in itself cause his Christlikeness.

The possession of these qualities in the present stage of the development of Christ's religion will compel the Christian to do certain things which were not thought of in Christ's time. It may force him to believe some things which were unbelievable before Christ's leaven had leavened the mass of the world's ignorance. But the spirit which vitalizes his beliefs and actuates his deeds will be in him the fruit of the germinal spirit of Christ.

The essential Christian is one who strives to be actuated by the spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER SECOND

What is the Essential Christian Creed?

Sec. 1. *A Popular Demand of the Day*

T is quite the fashion in these days to belittle any definite form of Christian belief. Creed subscription has been relegated to the realms of oblivion not only by the outside critics of the religion of Jesus, but even by some of its most prominent exponents. Give us a practical religion, not a speculative philosophy, is a demand of the day. And in answer to this demand, episcopates and presbyteries are overhauling their ancient formulas of faith, while some independent churches have already filed away the creeds of their fathers, substituting therefor simple declarations of Christian purpose, and short covenants of church loyalty.

This popular demand for a practical religion

is expressive of a particular stage of the development of the religion of Christ. Indeed it is one of the signs which seem to indicate the beginning of a new epoch of Christian activity. If one were to attempt to describe in a word the manifestation of the Christian religion which is characteristic of the twentieth century, one would use the word philanthropy. In former less busy and more philosophic centuries, Christians were naturally interested in a desire to understand God. Those were the days of theology. But in this practical, busy age, speculative explorations into the realm of the abstruse and intangible have ceased to be of paramount interest. To-day, instead of asking, "What can I believe about God?" men are asking, "What can I do for men?"

This is a change of interest in the religion of Christ, but by no means a lack of interest. It is a change which we should naturally expect, if we but remembered that the religion of Jesus, like everything else in God's world, is a development, and if we gave due weight to

the modifying truth that the development of religion must run parallel to the development of society.

The century just opening to us is a century which is marked by intense activity along all lines of human interest. It will not be a great literary age. It will be an age impatient of abstruse thinking and of philosophical reasoning. The brains of this century will be devoted for the most part to the pursuit of tangible achievements. Scientists will turn their attention more and more towards discoveries which shall be not merely interesting but useful. Writers and lecturers will deal more exclusively with themes that are closely connected with the everyday work of a busy world. Philosophers and essayists will be practical utilitarians, at least in what they contribute to the world's thought. But by far the most of the brain effort of the next century will be directed towards industry and commerce, government and finance, civic and social improvements.

Since the universal trend of the times is toward activity, the trend of the religion of Jesus

must be towards a Christlike control of that activity. Preachers, evangelists and Christian reformers in this century must tell men how they may act like Christ rather than merely what they must think about Christ. Churches must increasingly inspire their members to the ministry of the poor, the sick, and the unfortunate, and they must not be content if they only furnish a place of worship for their own supporters. If clergymen and church officers will but heed the signs of the times, the coming years will be productive of great progress toward the Christian solution of the problems of industry and politics, towards the betterment of the condition of the poor, and towards the decrease of the selfishness of the rich. It will be a century made notable by the successful operation of many forms of Christian charity, and by the development of new enterprises for the Christianization of the world.

Every man, then, who is interested in the advance of the Kingdom of God in the world should hail the cry for the revision or the abolition of church creeds as the herald of new

opportunities for Christian activity. For, be sure of this, there would be no such demand if men were indifferent to the Christian religion. It is because they are practically and truly religious that they are impatient of the repetition of old formulas which have in themselves no necessary connection with Christian living. The demand of the day is not for the abolition of any belief which may be necessary to rational Christian activity, but it is a demand most insistent and imperative for the abolition of all beliefs that are not necessarily involved in the very essence of the religion of Jesus.

Sec. 2. *The Unessential Christian Belief*

The unessential Christian belief is that belief of the intellect which has no direct bearing upon the conduct of the life. In other words, it is the belief which is not convertible into action. If in itself it can neither make a man better, nor inspire his effort, then it is unessential. It may be true, but it is not vital. It may be reasonable and logical, but it is not fundamental. Christianity is the art of living, not a mere

science of life. The Christian, therefore, must be considered only as an artist. As an artist, he needs a belief in certain practical verities. But he can leave to the scientist all philosophical speculations which may seek to account for those verities.

For illustration, suppose a man is set to till the soil. If he is to be a successful agriculturist, he must believe certain fundamental truths concerning the rotation of the seasons and the fertility of the soil. Did he not believe these verities, as a rational man he would not plow his field nor plant his seed; hence he could not reap his harvest. But he does not need to understand all the scientific explanations of atmospheric pressure, of climatic changes, and of the chemical properties of the soil. He needs to believe that the seed will grow, else he will not plant it, but he need not be compelled to believe all the speculative theories which try to account for the seed's inherent vitality.

If we accept this analogy, we are ready for a general statement concerning the Christian's beliefs that are unessential. The Christian,

since he is a rational being, must believe that the seed which he drops will grow. He must believe that a good deed will have a good influence, or he will not try to perform good deeds. He must believe that a life of sacrifice is more noble than a life of selfishness, or he will not try to live such a life. But to be successful in living Christ's life, he does not need to believe the theologian's scientific theories concerning the reason *why* good deeds bear good fruit; nor yet need he accept either the oldest or the newest theological explanation of the origin of love. The explanation may be correct; that is, some explanation may be correct. Evidently all explanations cannot be true in all their details, for many of them are inherently contradictory. But whether the theological explanation be true or not, is now beside the question. It is not vital. Just as the verity of sunlight is independent of all astronomical explanations concerning the origin of the sun, so the verity of the life of Christian love is independent of all theological explanations of the nature of that love.

It does not follow, therefore, that theology has no reason for existence. That would be like the affirmation that astronomy and chemistry are unneeded sciences. But theological speculation is only for the Christian man of science. The Christian practitioner need accept no particular dogma of speculative theology. He need believe only the verities which he can convert into action and which, therefore, alone can affect the cultivation of his character.

Should one attempt to enumerate the specific doctrines of the Church that are thus to be classified as unessential, he would surely be severely criticised. In prudence, it would be much safer to leave to each individual the application of the general principle which has here been stated. At the risk, however, of adverse criticism, for the sake both of clearness and of comprehensiveness, the application of the principle must be made somewhat specific.

If the proposition be true that Christ is the vital principle of the Christian religion, and that essential Christianity is Christlikeness, we should not hesitate to deduce from this prop-

osition the following corollary relating to the Christian belief. The Christian's essential belief is that which has grown from Christ. And, on the contrary, all beliefs are unessential which do not have their origin in him.

This assertion does not mean to imply that there can be no enlargement and development of Christian doctrine. There must be growth. As Christianity itself is a development arising from the application of Christ's principle of life to succeeding conditions, so the truths of Christianity must be developed along parallel lines. There will always be a demand for a new theology to keep pace with the growth of vital religion. One may to-day reasonably believe truths about God and Christ, which Paul and Augustine did not believe,—but to be a Christian he need not believe any truth which has not grown naturally and inevitably from the truth that actuated Christ himself. The dogmas of theology which Jesus did not make the basis of his life may safely be considered as unnecessary to the foundation of the Christian's life.

Sec. 3. *The Creed of Christ*

In the attempt to understand the essential verities of Christ's religion very much has been said and written concerning what Jesus taught others to believe, but too little has ever been suggested concerning what Jesus himself believed in its relation to the demanded Christian belief. Yet since Jesus, however we may interpret him theologically, must have been in his earthly life mentally akin to all other men, he must as a rational being have taught certain things only because first he believed certain truths. He must have acted, not from impulse, but from reasonable motive. Behind all his works and his deeds there must have been actuating convictions. Being thus like all mankind a man of reasoning motives, his character cannot be adequately explained without reference to the faith in him which determined his character.

What was the vital creed of Jesus? What reason had he for the early consecration of himself to the service of mankind? What faith empowered his resistance of temptation, and

enabled his patient, sympathetic ministry for others? What conviction sustained him in agonizing Gethsemane and on sacrificial Calvary? Can we answer such questions as these?

It is always hazardous to detach the isolated sayings of any man and to affirm that here he expresses his very self, that this is the man's deepest conviction. For we cannot really know any man's deepest convictions until we know the whole of his life. Perhaps perfectly to comprehend the inmost thoughts and the actuating motives of the Savior of men, would mean that we must know him as we can never know him from the meager, broken accounts of the Gospel narratives. Yet so much of himself has been revealed in these narratives that a sympathetic and unprejudiced student of the Gospels cannot fail to catch at least some glimpse of the actuating convictions of his life.

Let the earnest seeker after truth turn again to the biographies of Jesus with the one purpose to discover the faith which actuated him, and he will find persisting throughout all the

narrative of his life three controlling ideas. From the many passages which incorporate these ideas the following are selected because of their conciseness:

"I must work the works of him that sent me." (John 9:4.)

"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.)

"From this time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must suffer many things." (Matt. 16:21.)

The first two passages are the avowal of the purpose of his life; the last expresses his conviction concerning the method by which the purpose was to be fulfilled.

If one were searching for evidence concerning Christ's belief about matters which did not primarily influence his life, he would find it necessary to add to the passages which express these three fundamental and controlling ideas. One could discover words, for example, which seem to indicate his belief in his own preëxistence. Certainly it could be shown that he believed in his postexistence. The narratives

contain some evidence that he believed in a time of final judgment, and in the separation of the good from the bad. Most assuredly, too, one could infer that Jesus believed in the Kingdom of God in the heart of the individual, and in the prevalence of the Kingdom in all the world.

But these beliefs were not the primary, actuating forces in his life. He neither said nor implied that he performed deeds of kindness, because he believed he had been with God or because he hoped to go to God. He did not heal the sick nor forgive sinners because he hoped thereby to win for himself a reward in the day of judgment. He did not teach that he gave himself "a ransom for many" simply because he hoped thus to hasten the advance of God's Kingdom in the world. He ministered to men, he loved men, he died for men, because he believed that he must work the works of God and because he believed that work was to save lost souls by sacrifice.

From these passages, then, which reveal all of the belief of Jesus which primarily actuated his conduct, with some temerity but with rea-

sonable certainty we can deduce Christ's fundamental creed. Let us arrange this creed in the form of Articles of Faith.

THE CREED OF JESUS

1. I believe that God is my Father, whose work I must do.
2. I believe that man is my brother, whose soul I must save.
3. I believe that I must serve my Father and save my brother by the sacrifice of love.

Only three simple articles, but what a complete creed they make! The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the compulsion to sacrifice.

But as we think of this attempt to formulate the creed of Jesus, we must remember that the compulsions it suggests were to him not the obligations of hateful duty but the joyful service of abundant love. It was *his* Father whose work he must do, the Father whose nature of purity and justice and truth he knew, the Father whom he loved and who loved him. It was *his* brother whom he must save, the

brother for whom his soul yearned, the brother whom he would "gather to himself as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." It was the sacrifice of *love* which he must perform; not the obligation of stern necessity, but the sweet voluntary offering of love's one way of service.

So we must think of the "must" in the creed of Christ only as the sweet compulsion of his filial, fraternal, unselfish love. And we shall not understand the creed in its full significance to the Savior himself until we flood it with the light of that ecstasy of voluntary offering which found its sublime expression in the earnest wish of his heart, "that my joy might remain in you."

Sec. 4. *The Omissions from Christ's Creed*

When one seeks honestly and earnestly for the actuating faith of Christ's life, he must be struck first of all by the many notable omissions from the creed that actuated his conduct and formed his character. Rev. John Watson, of revered memory, never made a truer observation than when in his "Mind of the Master"

he said that "no one can fail to detect an immense difference between the teachings of Christ and the creeds which have been made by Christians. . . . It does not matter what creed you select, the Nicene, or the Westminster Catechism, they all have a family likeness to each other, and a family unlikeness to the Sermon on the Mount. They deal with different subjects, and they move in a different atmosphere."

How lamentably true are these words! Examine the creeds of men. They dwell, as Dr. Watson recalls, "on the relation of the three Persons in the Trinity; on the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus; on his miraculous birth through the power of the Holy Ghost; on the connection between his sacrifice and the divine law; on the nature of the penalty Christ paid, and its reference to the atonement; on the purposes of God regarding the salvation of individuals, and the collision between the human will and the divine will; on the means by which grace is conveyed to the soul; on the mystery of the

sacraments; and on the condition of the human soul after death."

Now, compare these concerns of the creeds of men with the concerns of Christ's creed. On all these questions which have constituted the body of the Christian dogma of churches Jesus was notably silent. Not one of them was an actuating principle in his life.

An examination of that most popular and most simple of the creeds used in public worship, the so-called Apostles' Creed, reveals the astounding fact that this creed contains for the most part only those beliefs which Christ's creed omitted, and that it omits almost all that Christ's creed contained. The Apostles' Creed omits all reference to Christ's life, passing from his miraculous birth immediately to his physical sufferings. The creed of Jesus was concerned almost wholly with his life. If he believed in his miraculous birth, he never said anything about it, much less did he make such a belief a cause for his life of service. If he knew the exact relation which he in his personality bore to the personality

of God, he spoke of that relationship only incidentally, claiming for himself only that he did the Father's work. Even what he believed about his death had apparently no reference to sacrificial atonement, but rather to the inevitable method of service. He believed that he must serve God and save men, therefore he believed that in a world of sin he must suffer.

Startlingly significant is the conclusion of these considerations. Practically all that the historic faith of the church has demanded as a basis of church membership and of Christian fellowship is absent from the actuating convictions of Christ himself. In other words, that which has been demanded of the followers of Christ as the basis of their Christlike living was not at all the basis of Christ's life.

Sec. 5. *The Essential Creed of the Christian*

From the necessary negations of the previous section we turn with relief to the more positive consideration. When he who would be a follower of Christ asks to-day, "What must I

believe to be a Christian?" the answer is two-fold: "If you would follow Christ you must accept the beliefs of Christ which made him what he was," and, "If you would really be Christlike, you must accept these beliefs *as* he accepted them."

In view of what has already been said in the last two sections, the first answer needs no illustration and but little comment. The beliefs of Jesus which formed his character and influenced his ministry were the three beliefs in the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and love's compulsion to sacrificing service. Since these were the formative influences in his life, one cannot reasonably hope to follow that life without their acceptance. Besides these truths, the Christian may believe anything that seems to him reasonable. He may accept implicitly the longest creed in Christendom, but that will help him only theologically. Accepting such a creed, he may be called by his fellows soundly orthodox, but to be truly Christian, he need accept only those beliefs which were fundamental to Christ himself.

The second answer perhaps needs more explanation. The Christian must accept the actuating faith of Christ *as* Christ accepted it. A moment's reflection will convince anyone that Christ's creed was not accepted merely in an intellectual sense, but in an ethical sense. There was a personal significance to each of the three articles of his belief. There was an irresistible compulsion about them all.

He did not believe merely in a "Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." He believed that God was *his* Father, and that belief carried with it a compulsion to filial obedience and service.

He did not believe in the brotherhood of man in vague, universal terms, simply because the logic of his thinking compelled him to see that this belief was the inevitable consequence of the Fatherhood of God. He believed that men were *his* brethren, and again the belief carried with it a compulsion, the compulsion to fraternal helpfulness. His brother he must save.

Nor did Jesus believe in the necessity of suffer-

ing and sacrifice, simply as a philosophical formula, a mere matter of deduction from the fundamental nature of the expression of love, much less as a necessary theory concerning any form of atonement. He believed that *he* must suffer. He believed that the love of the Father whom he would joyfully serve must be expressed to the brother whom he would gladly save by *his* sacrifice.

To be like Christ the Christian must believe *as* Christ believed. Merely to believe in the Father of love with his intellect will not help him to be Christlike. God must be *his* Father, and this filial relationship *he* must gladly accept. He, too, must believe that *he* must work the works of Him that sent *him*.

The Christian cannot believe in the universal brotherhood of man as a mere matter of theory. He must believe that the man in need who happens to be nearest him is *his* brother, and this fraternal relationship *he* must joyfully acknowledge. He must believe that *he*, too, must save *his* brother.

Nor can he be a true Christian by believing

only in the necessity of someone else's sacrifice. It will not vitally help him to be a Christian to believe that Christ sacrificed for him. He must believe that *he* must sacrifice for others. He, too, must be fully convinced that *his* filial duty to God and *his* fraternal relations with men demand that *he* "must suffer many things," and it must be his ideal to be so filled with the Christlike love that he can accept the suffering with joy unspeakable.

The essential creed of the Christian is brief and simple, but it is personal and compelling. Let us think of it soberly. Let us not only believe it with our minds; let us accept it with our wills. Here it is.

THE ESSENTIAL CREED OF THE CHRISTIAN

Article 1. I believe that God is my Father whom I must serve.

Article 2. I believe that man is my brother whom I must save.

Article 3. I believe that I must serve my Father and save my brother by the sacrifice of love.

All of which the Christian may express in terms of his relationship to Christ, remembering that in himself as in Jesus, the compulsions of his belief are the sweet, joyful compulsions of filial, fraternal, unselfish love:

I believe that the truths which were actuating convictions in Christ must move me to follow his example.

CHAPTER THIRD

What is the Essential Christian Experience?

Sec. 1. *The Need of Personal Experience*

HE modern demand for a practical Christianity has popularly been supposed to have deprecatory reference not only to the creeds of churches, but to the personal religious experiences of Christians. Such terms as repentance, conversion, consecration, and communion have of late been treated lightly as the relics of a Christianity long since outgrown; and such terms as benevolence, charity, and social service have been supposed to supplant them.

We remarked in our last chapter that a prevalent impatience with meaningless and unessential theological formulas was a sure sign of the beginning of a new era of Christian activity. Now we must observe that an era of

Christian philanthropy must inevitably be marked by a depreciation of personal experiences. Philanthropy is a word whose significance is wholly social. Repentance and conversion are words whose significance is wholly personal. We may go still farther. Essential Christianity as we have tried to define it is simply Christlikeness, and Christlikeness in its essential method of expression is simply and solely the ministry of unselfishness. But unselfishness, too, is a word which has no meaning apart from its social application, while repentance and conversion are words which have no meaning apart from their personal application.

These observations lead us logically to the following conclusion. Personal religious experience cannot be considered as the end of the Christian life. The end of the Christian life is social service.

But this conclusion by no means denies the necessity of the personal experience. The social service of the Christian is indeed something that must be intensely unselfish in its

motive and social in its operation. Christian philanthropy must always have more reference to other men than it has to self. Yet though service has a social object, to be really Christian it must have a personal subject. We give *to* others. We give *of* ourselves.

If Christian charity were only the cold-blooded bestowal of the coin upon the beggar, the personal experience of the benefactor would be immaterial. The coin will purchase as much of the needed food and clothing, whether it be bestowed by a character the most sainted or the most sordid. Indeed the purchasing power of the coin would be the same even though it should be turned out into the hand of the beggar by the operation of an insensate machine. Much of our charity may perhaps be characterized as machine-like. But such charity is not of the essence of Christianity.

In essential Christianity one cannot separate the gift from the giver. To be truly Christ-like is to give one's self. True Christian charity, then, has its personal as well as its social significance. Hence the personal char-

acter of the Christian is of utmost importance, even though the object of his Christianity be social and not personal at all. Because his personal character is of importance, the personal experiences which have helped to form the character become of fundamental interest.

We must here be careful to give a comprehensive significance to the term experience. Personal experience is simply personal history. All the hopes and aspirations, the achievements and the disappointments which have made the man what he is, constitute his experience. All the hopes and aspirations, all the struggles and the failures which have made him religiously what he is, constitute his religious experience.

It has too often been customary to limit religious experiences to certain crises in personal history. Such limitation we must carefully avoid. Certain crises may mark certain stages of development, but the development may be a reality even though the crises be not apparent. The history of the development of personal Christian character should be marked off into

epochs only for the sake of convenience. Names should be given to the description of those epochs only with the utmost caution, and with the frankest confession of their inadequacy. Since no two persons were ever exactly alike, it is safe to say that no two ever had precisely the same personal experiences. In religion as well as in all other phases of human living, we shall always have variety of experience. But the variety will be in details rather than in fundamentals. The differences will be in the degree in which men become conscious of the experiences, rather than in a real difference in the experiences themselves. Certain inevitable characteristics will always mark the personal development of him who becomes really Christlike, for certain fundamental characteristics are observable in the personal development of the Christ, whom the Christian must follow.

Sec. 2. *A Prevalent Misapprehension*

Before we turn to a consideration of Christ's personal experiences and their relation to the

necessary experiences of the Christian, we must pause for a moment to clear from our proposed pathway the rubbish of a grave misapprehension.

It has been too much the habit of certain Christian teachers and preachers to relate the personal experiences of Christians to their hope of personal salvation into heaven. The plea for personal salvation has been based upon the threatened eternal punishment of continued sin. The acceptance of Christ's sacrifice has been urged as the means of deliverance. The *summum bonum* of Christian desire has been presented as the assurance of the possession of a "mansion in the sky." With this personal salvation into heaven as the one desired end of the Christian profession, the corresponding experiences of the Christian, commonly accepted as such, have been these:—(1) A grievous consciousness of the guilt of sin; (2) an exultant consciousness of the removal of the guilt by the "blood of Jesus"; and, (3) a peaceful, not to say prideful, consciousness of the assurance of eternal bliss.

All these experiences are based upon the most childish and most selfish conception of the Christian religion. When such experiences as these are demanded of the Christian, and only such, the implication is that the religion of Jesus has no significance except as it relates to one's own individual and selfish welfare. Inasmuch as the Christian religion is more than a manner of the deliverance of the individual soul from eternal punishment, in so much more must the experiences of the Christian have other than this ultra-selfish application.

Not all people are alike introspective. It may be that there are some people too busy trying to help their unfortunate neighbors to give much thought to their own unfortunate selves. It may be that there are those who are more burdened for the sins of others than for their own sins. It is possible that there are some who are more anxious to secure for others decent dwelling places upon the earth than to secure for themselves the mansions of heaven. Now, these people who are apparently more

interested in the welfare of others than in their own welfare are no less Christian people than their more introspective neighbors. Indeed, if Christianity be the philanthropic service of others, they may truly be called Christians of the more mature type; and the fact that so many men are to-day more interested in the present salvation of society than in the future salvation of themselves may be taken as a direct proof of development towards the religious ideal of Jesus. For the one object of the ministry of Jesus was the salvation of others. And Jesus taught the truth that the Christian world has not yet entirely learned—that no man should think first of saving his own life, but that his own salvation would result from his service of others.

We must frankly admit, then, that those religious experiences which arise from the introspective habit of mind are not the essential Christian experiences. They may be real experiences to some; they cannot be demanded of all. But when we make this admission we do not at all do away with the necessity of the

personal religious experience. We must still remember that the social object of Christian living always demands a personal subject. Social helpfulness is the result of personal experience just as truly as is personal piety. To do good is as much a personal acquirement as to be good. The mode of the personal Christian experience will change as the object of the Christian life develops from the crude, selfish conception of individual salvation into the more mature and unselfish conception of social service. The *mode* of the experience will change, but the intensive personality of the experience will remain the same.

In this more mature conception there may be little of the consciousness of personal guilt for one's own sins, but there must be much of the consciousness of personal responsibility for the sins of others. There may be no exultant consciousness of the salvation of one's self by the sacrifice of Christ, but there should be an equally exultant consciousness of the joy of serving someone else by one's own sacrifice. There may, indeed, be no evidence at

all of the peaceful assurance of the future heavenly mansion furnished by God for one's self, but we should expect the trustful, helpful assurance of clean, pure, wholesome earthly habitations furnished by those who are trying to work together with God for the promotion of his Kingdom here and now.

The man who has experienced within himself a feeling of personal responsibility for others, a personal satisfaction in helping some other ever so little, and an abiding hope of the eventual establishment of the divine Kingdom upon the earth,—that man must be considered according to Christ's standard as really a Christian as he who experiences the corresponding emotions with reference to his own eternal welfare. If the latter man experiences only those emotions which have their intensely selfish causation, the former must be considered the more mature and, therefore, the more Christlike Christian.

We must free our minds, then, from the misapprehension that the essential personal experiences of the Christian must arise either

from any conception of one's own personal lost condition apart from Christ or from any desire for one's own personal salvation through Christ. True Christian experiences of a lower order may in some instances arise from these lower conceptions and desires; but the vital Christian experience arises from the conception of the lost condition of other men and from the desire to render to these a Christlike service.

Sec. 3. *The Religious Experience of Jesus*

We are ready now to try to understand the religious experiences of Jesus, our Master, and our one Example. Unfortunately very little attention has ever been given to the study of the religious experience of Christ in its relation to the essential religious experience of Christians. The Church has always insisted upon the necessity of the religious experience of the professed follower of Christ, but it has never based that necessity upon the recorded experience of Christ himself. Indeed, the Church has in general considered Christ's personality so

unique as to separate him from all possible experiences of anyone else. Preachers have bidden their congregations with one breath to follow Jesus, and with the next breath they have declared that by his miraculous birth he was lifted above humanity to a position humanly unattainable. Evangelists have exhorted their hearers to grow like Christ, at the same time that they have asserted that Christ's unique relation with God has made his character unapproachable. In short, the Christlikeness of the demanded Christian experience has been made impossible by the very teachings that have required it.

To make good this assertion, let us consider a few specifications. The Church has demanded of Christians the experience of repentance. Jesus did not repent. The Church has considered it essential that Christians must be converted. There is no record that Christ was converted. Some Christian teachers have taught the necessity of a revolutionary crisis after conversion, called the conscious experience of sanctification or the Baptism of the Holy

Ghost. The life of Jesus witnesses no such revolutionary crisis. The Church has preached John the Baptist's message of repentance; it has upheld the Saul of Tarsus type of conversion; it has magnified the Pentecostal experience of the disciples. The Christian teachers of the centuries past have asserted that the essential characteristic of the Christian's experience shall be revolutionary, while the experience of Jesus was evolutionary. Jesus, as the narrative distinctly states, "grew in favor with God." (Luke 2:52.) But since Paul's time we have been told that the follower of Jesus can be saved only "by the grace of God." (*Vide* Eph. 2:5.)

It is this phrase "grew in favor," or, as the Greek words may be more correctly translated, "grew in grace," which furnishes us with the key to the religious experience of Jesus.

The phrase in the first place necessitates our belief in the initial immaturity of the character of Jesus, for were his character perfect from his birth there could have been no growth. However we may interpret Christ theologically,

the historic person of Jesus began his life in spiritual immaturity, just as he began his life in physical immaturity. We can no more think of his soul as fully equipped at birth for the complete expression of God's love than we can think of the infant body in the Bethlehem manger as fully equipped to bear the suffering of Calvary. Jesus began with immaturity.

But this immaturity of soul must be distinguished from spiritual blemish. We are no more compelled to believe that spiritual incompleteness is sinfulness than we are to believe that physical incompleteness is synonymous with some malformation of the body. Immaturity is an incompleteness which needs only development. It is something which can be overcome by growth.

The process of the development of the soul of Jesus was a process which can be conveniently divided into epochs, though no notably apparent crises mark the limits of those epochs.

1. The first epoch of Christ's personal religious history seems to run quite parallel with

that period of physical development which ends at adolescence. We cannot be sure that Jesus at the beginning of adolescence became conscious of any clearly defined religious emotion. Our record of this time of his life is lamentably meager. Only one glimpse do we get of him at this stage of his development, and that is contained in a portion of the Gospel of Luke, whose authenticity has been called in question. Jesus, according to this narrative, went with his parents to the temple at Jerusalem. He was then twelve years of age. When his parents started to return from their act of customary Jewish worship, Jesus lingered behind. After some search they found him discussing religious matters with the religious leaders of his day, and he silenced his parents' natural complaint at his conduct by asking if they did not know that "he must be about his Father's business."

These words, reported to have been spoken by the boy Jesus, offer no conclusive proof of the personal experience through which he was passing, but the suggestion of the words is illumina-

ting. Indeed, if Jesus never said these exact words at all, we know from the expressed conviction of his later life (*Vide* John 9:4) that he must previously have passed through a religious experience which these words quite accurately describe. At what may have been an epochal stage in his physical development he entered upon a new epoch in his religious history. It was the epoch of the consciousness of God the Father. It was the glad welcoming into his life of the compulsion of his obligation to the Father.

2. Our narratives give us no further glimpse of Christ's growth in grace until we come to the baptism in the Jordan, which marked the beginning of his public ministry. We cannot, therefore, trace the process by which the early acceptance of his duty to his Father evolved the consciousness of the necessity of his own personal ministry. But we can witness the act which expressed his acceptance of the ministry. The baptism was his act of consecration to the service of others. Earlier in life he had accepted his filial obligation to God.

Now in the Jordan he avows his acceptance of the consequent obligation to his fellow men. The epoch in his religious history whose outward sign was expressed by his baptism was the epoch of the consciousness of the needs of men. It was the acceptance into his life of the compulsion of service.

3. The record of the ministry of Jesus begins with the account of the temptation in the wilderness and ends with the institution of the Lord's Supper in the upper room at Jerusalem. In other words, it begins with the allurements of a costless ministry and ends with the sublime symbolism of the true ministry's cost in sacrifice. From the temptations, though they are allegorically reported, we are to learn not only that he was "in all points tempted like as we are," but also that he was tempted exactly as we are, to choose the less costly method of service. From the institution of the Lord's Supper we are to learn not only that Jesus would have his disciples remember the sufferings of his service, but also that he would have them learn what he himself

had learned—that all service must cost suffering.

Along all the hard road which led from the real temptation of Jesus to his real acceptance of the way of sacrifice, we cannot follow. We know not just when he became conscious in himself of complete victory over the temptation. We cannot tell just when he accepted in his consciousness the truth which he tried to impart to his disciples when he began to teach them "that he must suffer many things." But we need not know the precise moment when there came to him this new self-consciousness. All we need to understand is that the consciousness did come to him. Some time after the recorded temptation to evade suffering, and some time before the institution of the sacred symbol of suffering, Jesus entered into another epoch of personal history. This last epoch was the consciousness of the need of sacrifice. It was the acceptance into his life of *the way* by which he must serve his Father and save his brethren.

The Savior's "growth in grace," then, we

may with reasonable accuracy mark off into three stages of development. They were, the consciousness of the acceptance of his filial relation to God, the consciousness of his acceptance of his fraternal obligations to men, and the consciousness of his acceptance of the way of sacrifice.

These three discernible stages in what we may call Christ's religious experience follow closely, as inevitably they must, the three fundamental convictions which we called his creed. The convictions would not have been vital unless they had culminated in experiences. The experiences would not have been real had they not developed from convictions.

Let us summarize. Jesus "grew in grace" through the consciousness of the Fatherhood of God, the consciousness of the brotherhood of man, and the consciousness of the necessity of sacrifice. His character was developed through the joyful acceptance into his life of the obligations of these three conscious experiences which were in turn the result of his inner convictions. Because of these experi-

ences he became the one whom we must follow, if we would be really Christlike.

Sec. 4. *The Interference of Sin*

In our consideration of the religious experiences of Jesus, we must always stand amazed at his utter unconsciousness of the experience of sin. Here, indeed, have we discovered his real uniqueness. No other person has ever dared to challenge his fellows with such fearless words as these: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" Not one besides him has ever successfully claimed entire freedom from guilt.

Yet Jesus was almost constantly performing acts which were justly censured by his contemporaries. When he ate with publicans and sinners, he was guilty of a breach of ceremonialism, considered most vital to the religion of his people; and one can find no fault with the scribes and Pharisees for their condemnation of his conduct. When he healed the sick on the Sabbath, he was, according to rabbinical interpretation, breaking a command of Jehovah; and the severe criticism of the rabbis was inevitable.

When he justified his disciples for a like infringement of the Sabbath law, in their case with no excuse of benevolent intention, but only to satisfy their own hunger, he manifested a disregard for sacred tradition which was apparently without excuse; and the consequent hatred of the upholders of those traditions he must have expected.

Whenever Jesus did anything which his contemporaries were wont to characterize as sin, he always explained away the supposed sinfulness of the act by an appeal to a higher tribunal. The law of ceremonial cleanliness must give place to the law of the service of the lost. The infringement of the literal interpretation of specific commands did not matter, provided the motive of the infringement was that of unselfish benevolence. Men were not made for laws; laws were made for men. "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

It is very significant that Jesus used the term "Son of man" when he thus announced his superiority to the traditions of the elders. From the context, this use of the phrase cannot

logically be taken to refer to any claim of divineness which Jesus made for himself alone, but solely to a claim of ideal humanness which he made for all mankind. It was as though he were exemplifying in himself the truth that all men are ideally greater than the laws which have been enacted for their government, and that therefore no man should be judged by his infringement of this or that commandment. Only should he be judged by the selfishness or the unselfishness of the motive which actuated him.

Such reflections as these lead inevitably to the following conclusion:

Though Jesus was the only person who ever fully demonstrated his independence of man-made laws by the constant manifestation of sinless motives, ideally all persons *ought*, like him, to be above human law. And again, like him, they ought to be emancipated from law by participation in love. They ought to be superior to all laws of human government, because they ought always to be actuated by the unselfish motives of their divine inheritance.

When we give to sinlessness the spiritual significance illustrated by Jesus, that of perfect inward obedience to the motive of love, rather than that of perfect outward obedience to the laws of men, we can claim for ideal humanity, created in God's image, nothing less than Jesus claimed for himself as the Son of man. When we observe that no one but Jesus has attained this ideal, we must not therefore conclude that the ideal itself has become impaired. We must assume only that individual attempts to attain the ideal have failed.

Sin, theologically considered, has too often been supposed to lower the human ideal. It has been assumed that since one man once failed to be what he ought, all other men cannot expect to be what they ought. Because of the sin of Adam, theology has been prone to consign all men to a state of original sinfulness. But over against this theological conception of the necessary universality of sin we must put the one example of the sinlessness of Jesus. Instead of saying that because one man sinned all others must sin, we

should say that because one man was sinless all others ought to be sinless. Instead of assuming that sin is a necessary experience of humanity because of Adam, we who are Christians should deny its necessity because of Christ.

But when we are bold enough to make this denial of necessary sin, we must be careful to understand just what we mean by sin. *Immaturity* is not sin. Jesus was born immature. An *inherited tendency* to wrongdoing is not sin. Jesus, whether he was born of one human parent or of two, must have shared somewhat in the common inheritance of humanity. The *selfish desire* which makes temptation real is not sin. Since Jesus was tempted he must have felt a desire for the selfish end, else had there been no reality to the temptation. Sin is the *conscious, willful choice of the selfish.* To sin is *to yield* to the selfish desire. To sin is *volitionally to follow* the inherited tendency to evil. Mistakes and failures must ever be the product of immaturity, but sin is an act only of the conscious volition of the mature. The necessity for

the experience of such sin we who believe that Christ was our example must stoutly deny, even while we sorrowfully admit that the fact of such sin is present with us all.

We must go farther than this. We must deny not only the necessity of the experience of sin, but also the consequent necessity of those religious experiences which assume necessary sin as their condition.

Obviously, if we deny that sin is necessary we must also deny the necessity of repentance. No man needs to repent of sin for which he has not been personally responsible. Descent from Adam does not call for repentance, but only actual participation in conscious wrong-doing.

Again, if we deny the necessary participation in sin of all humanity, we must deny that the experience of conversion is necessary to all men. No man needs to turn from sin unless he himself has by an act of free will consciously pursued sin.

We must hold up as the ideal of Christian attainment, then, not these revolutionary ex-

periences which presuppose the soul's malformation, but only and always those evolutionary experiences of Jesus himself, which presuppose only immaturity.

Repentance and conversion will be necessary Christian experiences to that man to whom sin is a conscious human experience. Repentance is sorrow for the sin, and conversion is turning away from its pursuit. But these experiences are necessary only because of the accident of sin. They are not necessary because of *any fundamental characteristic of humanity.*

We must be careful, indeed, that we do not teach men that they need to sin in order that they may be "saved by grace." Jesus has taught men that God will be graciously forgiving, when they have sinned. But though the prodigal son was saved by grace, the elder brother had the preferable commendation, "Son, thou art always with me." The commended faithfulness of the elder brother and not the forgiven profligacy of the younger is the type of the more desirable relationship of men with God. We must teach men that

they need not go away from their Father's home. We must teach them so to live that they will need only to "grow in grace." The *natural* way for the soul to come into the experience of Christianity is the way of development. Christian nurture is nearer Christ's way than Christian revivals. Evolution is more natural than revolution. Sin is an interference with the natural order of the soul's growth, and not a necessary experience in that growth.

Sec. 5. *The Essential Experiences of the Christian*

Let us now go back to the experiences of Jesus which we saw could be appropriately designated as the inevitable consequences of the three actuating convictions of his life, the experiences of filial relationship with God, of fraternal relationship to men, and of love's compulsion to sacrifice. We have now to inquire in just what sense these experiences are essential to the Christian of to-day. Must we expect the Christian's experiences to be literally identical with

Christ's? Shall we insist that the Christian must become conscious of all these experiences each in its turn? And are we to believe that these experiences are wholly unrelated to any of the experiences of Christians commonly accepted throughout all the ages of historic Christianity?

The answer to the last question is a decided negative. Far from being unrelated to the common experiences of professed Christians, the experiences of Christ are in their fundamental characteristics identical with those experiences which organized Christianity has uniformly demanded of its adherents. The answers to the previous questions will be made apparent if we trace this identity somewhat in detail.

1. The *New Birth* is the name which organized Christianity has generally used to designate the beginning of Christian experience. Some portions of the Christian Church insist that the new birth shall be accompanied by evidences of repentance, and that in its essence it is a conversion from a state of sinfulness. Other parts of

the Church Universal see in the new birth only an evidence of the initial stage of spiritual development, which needs but confirmation. But all the Church is practically united in its insistence upon a necessary beginning of the spiritual life.

That is all that is essential in the fundamental idea of the new birth. The new birth is a beginning. Just as physical birth is the beginning of physical life, so the "New Birth" is the beginning of spiritual life.

The first consciousness of the new life is in both instances the consciousness of filial dependence. In both instances, too, the fact of the birth may normally antedate the consciousness of the birth. All that is necessary to the Christian's consciousness is that at some time he shall feel within himself the impulses of a divine conception. As Jesus expressed it, he must feel the compulsion to work the works of God.

As to how this new feeling may have originated he need not question. The fact of the new birth is to be inferred from its observed results, not from an understanding of the nature of its in-

ception. Just as we know a child has been born of human parents when we witness its life, so we know a soul has been born of God when we witness its love. Like Nicodemus, the Christian Church has sometimes asked *how* these things could be. But it is absolutely impertinent to meet the manifestations of life itself with a speculative inquiry concerning the origin of life.

The essential characteristic of the new birth is not conditioned by the experience of sin. It is just the beginning of a new and natural phase of human development. We can properly say that a child has been born intellectually when first he becomes conscious of a thirst for knowledge, or we can say that a man has been born morally when he first feels within himself the compulsion of conscience. Some of these new births may be accompanied by observable signs. Some men may be able to say, "On such and such a day I was born intellectually, or morally, or religiously." But the knowledge of the exact beginning is by no means necessary.

When a human soul becomes conscious of its obligation to a divine Father, that soul has been

born. The time and the place and the circumstances of his birth are immaterial. He is a child of God.

2. *Baptism* is the universally accepted method by which professed Christians for nearly twenty centuries have expressed their consecration to the service of mankind. It is unfortunate that this method of consecration should have come to be considered only as a sacrament of the Church. It cannot properly be considered as such, for baptism antedates by many years the organization of the Church. Moreover, baptism as embraced by Jesus himself was not expressive of his admission to any formally organized body of believers; it was expressive only of his purpose to serve men. Baptism, then, if it really means anything to the Christian, means the expression of his experience of consecration.

The form of the expression does not matter. Jesus was probably immersed. But when any body of Christians have substituted sprinkling for immersion, they have thereby practically denied the necessity for the preservation of the

particular form used by Jesus himself. And when we once admit that the particular form of the consecration of Jesus in any of its details does not bind his followers, we have virtually admitted the immateriality of any form of expression. In this matter as in all others, the Christian is not called upon to do precisely the thing which Jesus did in precisely the same way. He is to be actuated by the spirit of Jesus.

The Christian, then, may express his acknowledgment of the purpose to serve others in any form of consecration that may seem to him best adapted to his needs. He may be immersed. He may be sprinkled. He may find none of the accepted forms of baptism suitable either to his needs or to his conditions. But in some way he, to be like Christ, must accept and publicly express the obligation of his fraternal service. Whether he submit to any church ordinance of baptism is immaterial, but really to be Christlike he must become openly consecrated to Christlike endeavor.

3. By the *Communion of the Lord's Supper* Christians throughout all the ages of Christian

history have been accustomed to express their relation to sacrifice, though they have sometimes understood it to signify their acceptance of Christ's sacrifice instead of their obligation to sacrifice for others. Unfortunately, the Communion of the Lord's Supper, like the ordinance of baptism, has been appropriated by the Church as a sacrament. More unfortunate still, most branches of the Christian Church have insisted that only those can properly commune who have been conventionally inducted into church membership. There was no organized church, however, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Those who communed with him at the first table of our Lord had confessed no definite creed nor observed any fixed ecclesiastical ceremony.

Another unfortunate circumstance is that the Church Universal is not agreed as to the exact significance of that institution which they have called a sacrament. A part of the Church has made the Lord's Supper to mean only an act in memory of the sacrifice of Christ. Another portion of the Church has considered it to embody

the actual presence of the body and blood of him who died that men might live. Sadly has the entire Church been prone to miss the full significance of the institution, as the expression of the communicant's willingness to sacrifice in Christ's spirit. But only as such does the communion of the Lord's Supper have vital significance to the true Christian. He may by the communion reverently and adorably remember the sacrifice of Christ, but unless he also expresses in the communion his own acceptance of Christ's method of service, the communion in itself will have no practical effect upon his Christian living. If the communion is to mean anything vital to the Christian, it must mean the expression of the truth that like Jesus, he has experienced the obligation upon him of love's one way of service.

Let the Christian become conscious within himself of his acceptance of the way of sacrifice, and he may express this inner experience in any outward observance that may seem to him to be adequate. He may express it in the worship of the Mass. He may express it by receiving the

emblems of sacrifice from the hands of the serving deacons or rectors. He may express it in the moment of silent communion without visible emblems. Or he may express it in no church ordinance at all, but only in the secrecy of his own heart. But however he may choose to express his community with the sacrifice of Christ, let him be sure that he feels it. For he cannot truly be a Christian unless with Christ he has consciously accepted the obligation and the privilege of sacrificing service.

Let us briefly summarize the results of our inquiry concerning the Christian's essential experiences. They must be in spirit like the experiences of Jesus himself. Like Christ, the Christian must become joyfully conscious of the compulsion of his filial relationship with God. Like him, he must consciously and voluntarily consecrate himself to the service of men. Like him, he must definitely accept as the principle of his life love's method of sacrifice. If to these three essential experiences he must add the experiences of repentance and of conversion, it is not because of anything that is fundamental

to his human nature; it is because he has chosen to go contrary to his God-created nature into ways of selfishness and of sin. Though we must admit that it will be some time before the ideal evolutionary experiences of Jesus himself will be all that the Christian needs, we must be careful to remember that the revolutionary experiences are necessary only because of the interference of sin, and not because they are in any ways involved in the nature of the religion of Jesus. Men *may* need to be "saved by grace." They *ought* to need only to "grow in grace."

The essential Christian experiences are the experiences of Jesus.

CHAPTER FOURTH

What is the Essential Christian Revelation?

Sec. 1. *The Bible; Its Accepted Preëminence*

IF an intelligent inhabitant of Mars who had never heard of Jesus of Nazareth should visit the earth, and should begin a careful study of the religion called Christian, he would naturally conclude that the religion was founded upon a Book instead of upon a Life. To this erroneous conclusion he would be led by the observation of many things.

In the first place he would observe that the preachers of the Christian religion are accustomed to base their homilies and exhortations upon passages taken from only one Book. He would observe that as a rule these preachers make no careful distinctions between the parts of the Book, that they reinforce their state-

ments with impartiality by words taken from the Gospels, or from the Epistles, from the Book of Genesis, or from the Book of Revelation. What is more pertinent, he would observe that these preachers give reverence to the utterances of certain Jewish writers, who never knew Christ at all, but who lived centuries before his day, and that they give to these pre-Christian writers more reverence than they are wont to accord to any modern Christian student of Christ's life. In brief, this intelligent observer would find the accredited preachers of the religion of Christ to be Bible preachers.

Again, this keen and interested student of the Christian religion would observe that in the schools where the Christian religion is taught to children and youth the only text-book in common use is the same single Book. He would find the entire body of Christian youths devoting much time to the study of Joshua, and of Samson, and of Elijah, gravely and reverently considering such incidents of unreligious value as the tying of firebrands to the tails of foxes, or as the ascent into the clouds of a prophet in

a chariot of fire. But he would note that this body of Christian pupils gives little, if any attention to the development of the religion of Christ after the first century, that it spends practically no time at all upon the discussion of present-day Christianity, and that it evidently ignores altogether the biographies of Christian heroes of modern times as well as the application of Christian principles to modern conditions. In short, he would find the only recognized school of the Christian religion to be a Bible school.

Once more, our imaginary Martian visitor would discover that among professed Christians the question of the authority of their religion is apparently inseparable from the question of the authority of this same all-important Book. He would learn that no suggestion of literary criticism of the Book has ever yet been given to the world that has not been supposed at first to threaten the spiritual vitality of the religion. He would discover that even to this day the careful critics of the Bible are held by some to be destroyers of the very religion of

Christ. In other words, the questioning student of our religion would find that the authority of the religion seems inextricably confused with the question of Biblical interpretation.

Who could blame this Martian, then, if in view of all these observations he should say that he perceived that men called themselves Christians because they believed in a Book? How could we justly criticise him if he failed altogether to discern that Christianity in its essence is a manner of Life? Nay, more, so long as this indiscriminating and exclusive authority is given to all of the body of Jewish literature which happens to be bound in one volume, how can we reasonably expect any real student of our religion to escape the error of our imaginary student?

Yet Jesus himself declared that he was the Way, he was the Truth, he was the Life. Most clearly indeed did Jesus evidence his own emancipation from observances and ceremonies commanded by those books which the followers of Jesus still hold to be most sacred and authoritative. Most emphatically did Jesus teach that vitally

to believe in him meant really to have fellowship with his spirit, and that the authority of his religion could have no recognized basis except the authority of him who dared to affirm, "*I* say unto you."

Sec. 2. *The Bible; Its Fundamental Helpfulness*

Wherein, then, shall we find any need of the Bible in the life of the Christian?

One suggested answer to this pertinent question is as follows: We, as Christians, need the Bible because the Bible is our only source of information concerning Christ. Evidently, however, this answer is at best only partial. The direct information concerning Christ which the Bible furnishes is limited to a very few pages. We have practically all of it in any one of the Synoptic Gospels. Indeed, not the whole of any of these Gospels would be absolutely necessary for the sole purpose of obtaining facts and information concerning Christ. For much of each of the Gospels is occupied with the observations and deduc-

tions of the author, and with other like extraneous matter. Shall we say that the chapters which relate the bare facts of the incidents of his life and his simple unedited sayings are all that we need from the Bible? This, indeed, is a fundamental need of the Book, but it is not its whole need.

A more comprehensive answer to our question has been thus suggested. We need the entire Bible because it is the setting of the jewel of the actual Christ biography. We need the Old Testament because it leads up to Christ, and the New Testament because it develops from Christ. Just as no man's life can be thoroughly understood apart from its connection with precedent and subsequent events, so we cannot hope to know the historic Christ apart from the history of his people. This also explains in part why the Bible is fundamentally helpful to the Christian, but not even yet have we found the complete answer to our query.

It is not simply the historic Christ whom Christians need to know. If the Christian be he

who is striving to be actuated by the spirit of Christ, and not merely he who seeks to imitate the particular things which Christ did, then the Christian needs to know more than the human setting of the historic Jesus. He needs to know the divine setting which was the eternal spirit manifested in Jesus. He needs to know not only the one actual and supreme example of the suffering of eternal love; he needs to know the yearning love itself which was thus exemplified. To know Jesus Christ is not all of that "eternal life" which is but another name for the Christlike life. Back of the knowledge of this one concrete expression of love in Christ there must be, according to the Savior's own words, the knowledge of "the one true God."

The Bible is a help to the Christian in his quest for God. In it he can study the revelation of God historically, in the relation of Jehovah to the people of Israel. In the Bible he can study the revelation of God as an evolution, from the crudest conception of a jealous, partial, unapproachable and unnamable deity

up to the apprehension of Him as the loving, forgiving Father of all mankind. In the Bible he can study God inspirationally, deriving from prophecy and from psalm, from history and from legend, from parable and from fact, many uplifting and ennobling thoughts of his relation to "Him in whom we live and move and have our being." Thus through the Bible do we come to know something of Him who in essence is a spirit, and whose final definition is Love. Thus can we be helped to know something of Him whose spirit of love Christ tried to show to all the world. The Life is the fundamental revelation of Love. The Bible is the revelation of that Life's inspiration.

Sec. 3. *The Revelation in Christ*

The life of Christ is to the Christian the most fundamental and vital revelation of God. But when we think of Christ's life as the revelation of God, we must be careful to include *all* the life,—its birth, its development, its ministry, its suffering, and its sacrifice.

To say that Christ has revealed God only in the sacrifice of Calvary is unduly to limit the meaning of his life. The death was only the end of the life of revelation and, as has been suggested in a previous chapter, the particular manner of the death was due to the sinful bigotry of the scribes and Pharisees and to the sinful cowardice of the Roman Governor, Pilate. On the other hand, to say that Christ revealed God only because of a supposed miracle connected with his advent upon the earth is unduly to limit the manifestation of God to the unusual, the spectacular, and the inexplicable. Those who base their acceptance of the revelation of God in Christ only upon some theory of sacrificial atonement, or only upon some mystery of divine incarnation, are alike negligent of the whole meaning and value of his life to the struggling Christian. Irrespective of what may seem to the individual Christian to be a reasonable theological belief about Christ's relation to God, all Christians may find in him the revelation of God. In Christ they are not merely to believe that

God was in the world, in Christ they are really to see God in the world.

In the birth at Bethlehem they are to see, not the result of a mystery, but the beginning of a life of reality. In the boy's obedience to his Nazarene parents, they are to learn that the way of the development of the life divine is the way of humble submission. In Christ's ministry to the sick and in his tenderness with the sinful they are to discern how God deals with the unfortunate in body and in soul. In the suffering of Jesus which finds its best expression in the words, "How often would I have gathered ye, and ye would not" they are to catch some glimpse of the suffering, bleeding heart of infinite Love rejected. In the blazing indignation of this divine man of purity and of love, in his scathing denunciation of hypocrisy, and in his fearless cleansing of the synagogue's corruption, they are to see the reverse side of the love of the infinite, the inevitable wrath of that divine love against all forms of unrepented pride and greed. And, finally, in the death on the cross they are to discover some-

thing of the immensity of the love that counts no cost of sacrifice too much to pay for the joy of service and of helpfulness.

God was in this life of infantile weakness and of natural human development; God was in this life of ministry to the needy and of the forgiveness of the sinner; God was in this life of righteous indignation and of purifying love; God was in this life of suffering love and of costly sacrifice. Whether we call Jesus the Incarnate Son of God, the Sacrificial Atonement, or the Perfect Man, the fact that his life revealed God remains unaltered.

The Christian who has found God in Christ has found his dearest and most vital revelation both of the Father's love and of the Father's will. Without this recognition of God in the life of his espoused Master and Lord, the Christian is deprived of that divine causality which alone can make his religion vital and efficient. To attempt to follow Jesus merely as a good man whose life reveals no eternal divine essence, is the attempt to measure one's religious life by a mere human standard;

but the attempt to follow God as revealed in the life of Jesus connects the Christian's Christlike endeavors with the divine purpose, and makes the goal of his religious aspiration nothing less than the limitless, eternal truth and boundless love of God himself.

Sec. 4. *The Revelation in Humanity*

Such a conception of the revelation of God in Christ as that suggested in our last section necessitates as its corollary the discernment of His revelation of Himself in all humanity. If the revelation of God in Christ depended upon any theological conception of Christ's uniqueness, we might assume that no natural man could ever reveal God. But if we discern in Christ's life of service and of sacrifice a revelation of God which is absolutely independent of any conception of his preëxistence or of his postexistence, of his miraculous birth or of his sacrificial death, then we must admit the truth that the same God may be revealed in a similar way by any human being. We must then recognize that God is revealed in

all acts of love and of service performed by any of his children anywhere. We must recognize in all humanity the capacity for God. The Christian who can thus discern in his fellow men the revelation of God does thereby establish a basis for hopeful Christian service without which his Christian life would be narrow, one-sided, and inefficient. This Christian sees in all men, even the basest, the possibility of Godlikeness. He touches the life of the individual sinner with the expectant hope that the touch will prove effective because of a response from the indwelling germ of divineness. He works for the redemption of society, inspired and emboldened to appeal to the moral consciousness of men by the assurance that the so-called "public conscience" is the evidence of the indwelling God. He hopes for the ultimate victory of justice and of purity, of honor and of righteousness, because he sees God in men and he knows that greater is He who is within them than any power of evil outside them.

Again, the Christian who has found the revelation of God in humanity has discerned his

own relation to humanity. To this man the human race is not a conglomeration of unrelated individuals, but a molecule of which every individual is a needed atom. When he has seen God in his fellow men, the Christian has caught some glimpse of the meaning of divine brotherhood. He has made some advance in the perception of the one divine family whose Father is God and whose ideal is unity with God. Perceiving the unity of the family of God, he has conceived himself as an essential part of the divine family, an entity in the unity, an individuality with individual powers and functions,—but a needed member with all his fellow men in the one divine brotherhood.

The brotherhood of man is conditioned not only by the Fatherhood of God, but by the existence of a divine parental likeness in every human being. So the Christian, who to be a Christian must live in brotherly relations with his fellows, must be able to discern God's presence in them all. The nature of his Christian service is not to bring God into men's lives,

but to help them in their lives to manifest the God-Spirit already there.

In the life of Christ the Christian sees the revelation of God in that life's uninterrupted sinlessness and in its perfect love. In the lives of other men he sees the revelation of God in their occasional victories and benefactions. In the lives of all men he sees the revelation of God in their potential victory over sin and in their power of righteousness. Patterning his life after the most perfect revelation he follows God in Christ, and thus he helps to bring men to a realization of the God in themselves.

Sec. 5. *The True Test of all Inspired Revelation*

In the previous sections of this chapter we have tried to suggest the fundamental helpfulness to the Christian of the Biblical revelation, and the vital way in which he may view the revelation of God both in Christ and in all humanity. But we have not yet exhausted all the ways in which God reveals Himself to men, nor could the subject be treated exhaust-

ively within the limits of any one volume. Here there can be indicated only the sure test of all divine revelation.

The test of an inspired revelation of God is the measure of its inspiration of men. When we apply this test to the Bible, we cannot believe either that all portions of the Bible are equally inspired, or that the possibilities of written revelation have been exhausted in canonical scriptures. When we apply the test to the life of Christ, we cannot believe either that all acts of Christ reveal God with equal force and power, or that all the possible living revelations of God were exhausted in this one supreme revelation.

Let us apply the test more in detail. First, to written revelation. What writing contains the more inspiring revelation of God,—the book of Esther wherein God is not once named, or the book of the "Pilgrim's Progress" wherein the soul experiences of the aspirant after a godly life are most clearly portrayed? Shall we give to the love poems of the Song of Solomon a position of sacred honor which we shall

deny to the poems of John Milton? Shall we reverence the history of the children of Israel of a thousand years before Christ, and not reverence the Christian history of all the children of God of a thousand and more years after Christ? Shall we find an inspiring revelation of God in the account of an ancient people's ascent from slavery, and find no inspiring revelation of the same God in the record of a modern people's advancement in civilization? Shall we derive religious inspiration from the homilies and exhortations of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and deny all inspirational value to the sermons of Spurgeon and Beecher and Brooks and Moody? Shall we attribute to the personal letter of Paul addressed to his friend Philemon a vital religious helpfulness which we shall deny to be present in the letters of a foreign missionary in Africa or in India addressed to his praying friends and supporters in America? Shall we conceive that John's vision on the Isle of Patmos was inspired, and that Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal" was uninspired?

When we ask ourselves such questions as these, the truth confronts us that the vital Christian revelation cannot be limited to the writings of any age or of any people. The real value of the writing is to be measured only by the good it inspires in the reader. The test of its inspiration lies not in its canonicity, but in its helpfulness.

When we apply this test, the measure of its inspiring power, to the living revelation in Christ, we must ask such questions as these: Must we believe that Christ's reported blasting of the fig tree presents an inspiring revelation of God just because it was done by Christ? Must we say that the recorded spectacular appearance of Jesus walking upon the water is of as much inspirational value to us as the account of his unselfish prayer for his murderers? Can we find God in the cures of Jesus whose method we do not yet understand, and fail to find Him in the more numerous but after all more wonderful cures of modern physicians accomplished through the understanding of God's laws and the application of God's remedies? Because

the sacrifice of Jesus seems to us to manifest the supreme love of God must we therefore deny the existence of any revelation of God's love in the redemptive suffering of martyred Christians, of patriotic and heroic soldiers murdered in the cause of justice, or of yearning, anxious parents dying of broken hearts for their wayward sons and daughters?

Just to ask these questions is to suggest their answers. There is only one healing, redeeming power in all the universe. It is God's power. Wherever and by whomsoever we see the process of redemption going on, there we know that we see the revelation of God's power. So there is only one kind of real love in the world. It is God's kind, the kind that is unselfish to the cost of sacrifice. Wherever and in whomsoever we see the sacrifice of unselfishness, there we see the revelation of the love that is God's. The religious value of the revealing life of Jesus of Nazareth or of the life of any other man, is to be measured wholly by the good influence of that life. Again, the test of its inspiration by God and of its revelation of

God, is to be estimated by its power to inspire and help others.

It is significant that Jesus evidently found more inspiration in contemporary events than in the sacred writings of his people. The texts of his sermons were suggested by Nature more often than by the Law or the Prophets. His truths were enforced by parables more than by Biblical citations. To him, God was revealed in the self-sacrificing generosity of the widow with her two mites as well as in the commandments of Moses,—in the beautiful adornment of the lilies of the field as well as in the prophecies of Isaiah and of Jeremiah.

To know God as Jesus knew him is the Christian's ideal, and whatever reveals to him God is the vital Christian revelation. He may find the revelation of God in writings called sacred or secular. He may find the revelation in a scientific treatise; he may find it in history or in biography; he may find it even in some recorded event of current history, in some newspaper item of the biography of the living. He may find God in ancient poetry or in modern poetry,

in psalm or in hymn, in prophecy or in sermon. He may find Him revealed in the written pages of books, or in the more beautiful unwritten pages of Nature. But wherever or however he may find God, revealed in His majesty and wisdom and beneficence and love, there has he found the very essence of the Christian revelation.

To the Christian, as to Jesus, the essential Christian revelation is all that, and only that, which to him manifests God.

CHAPTER FIFTH

What is the Essential Christian Church?

Sec. 1. *The Historic Church*

FTER the death of Jesus his disciples fell into the habit of assembling themselves together for confession, for mutual encouragement, and for united helpfulness. The first of such assemblies as recorded in the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles occurred in the upper room at Jerusalem, possibly the same room wherein Jesus in company with his disciples had celebrated the last Passover.

The room was hallowed by sacred memories. Just as many a bereaved heart has experienced a sense of the nearness of the departed in some spot beloved for its intimate associations, so here the bereaved disciples of Jesus came close to the spiritual presence of him whom they mourned.

It was natural that in this hallowed place the disciples should receive new inspiration concerning the nature of the work they were to do in the name of Christ, as well as an endowment of power for the accomplishment of that work. Out from this meeting place they went to teach and to preach, and to make converts to their cause. From the meeting there thus developed the beginning of the propaganda of the Christian religion.

By insensible degrees, however, the public assembly began to assume new prerogatives. After a while the Christians came together no longer merely for confession, for inspiration, and for power; they came together for the discussion of doctrine and for the establishment of government. No thoughtful person will say that either was unnecessary. The rapidly increasing number of Christ's followers could never have become a force in the world without organization, and no organization could have been efficient which did not seek both to satisfy men's intellects, and to command their allegiance. Hence the beginning of the Church as

we know it to-day, not simply an assembly of Christians, but an organization of Christians, adhering to some form of government and avowing some kind of doctrine.

It was natural that the doctrine which the organized followers of Jesus avowed should become more and more particularized as the years passed by. But as the doctrines became attenuated, there inevitably arose diversities of opinion. Whereas all Christians could be agreed, for instance, in the doctrine that Christ was their Savior, when men began to question as to how he became their Savior there followed necessarily endless discussions. On general truths men can be generally united; upon the specific, explanatory details of those truths, we may expect that they will always be divided.

Moreover, not only did the doctrines of the Church become particularized, but the government of the Church became abused. The recognized heads of the Church, in theory successors to Peter and to Christ himself, became in practice too much the seekers after their own selfish

ends. The government of the Church was used for the furtherance of men's private greed, and for the usurpation of temporal authority.

The great Protestant movement was in reality a demand for the restoration in the Church's government of the principle of Christ's unselfishness. But Protestantism in turn came to manifest a tendency to the arrogant assumption of authority. And in Protestant churches the abuse of power has given rise to new protestations, and new divisions, until one wonders if the divisive process will ever end.

By these two influences, the particularization of doctrine and the abuse of the power of government, it has come to pass that the Church Universal is to-day apparently universal in little more than its name. After nearly twenty centuries of Christian history it has been estimated that there are at present one hundred and eighty-six different sects of Christians. They differ from each other on matters of doctrine and of ritual and of government. All are avowedly based upon the authority of the one Christ. But they do not all sympathet-

ically try to understand each other's point of view, while some even refuse to recognize as real Christians all those who do not worship with themselves. Meanwhile, the unchurched masses look at the minutely divided Church with amazement, sometimes with amusement. And when they see professed Christian men and women zealous only for the welfare of their own church and often jealous of the prosperity of a neighboring church, they think, and some of them say, that the professed religion of Jesus is indistinguishable from a narrow and bigoted ecclesiasticism.

Sec. 2. *The Church, a Means to an End*

There is some excuse for the unchurched observer's mistake in confusing Christianity with ecclesiasticism, for indeed many church people are apparently more interested in the maintenance of the prosperity of their own particular church than in the promotion of Christ's universal kingdom of love.

There are church people, for instance, who seem to feel that they have done their whole

Christian duty if they but pay money into their own church's treasury. Some of these people give most generously and liberally. They erect costly church edifices, which they furnish luxuriously. Their church is richly carpeted. Their pews are deeply cushioned. Their memorial windows are most magnificent. Their organ is as expensive as it is sonorous. The choir of their church is widely advertised as the most liberally paid of any in the city. Their preacher is the most eloquent who can be lured from some smaller and more plebeian congregation by the pressing necessity of a larger salary. And some of the supporters of this richly endowed church sit comfortably in their cushioned pews of a Sunday morning in the smug self-satisfaction that they have ministered unto the Lord, when really they have but provided themselves with the beautiful things that are pleasing to their own cultured eyes, and with the melodious sounds that are soothing to their own æsthetic ears. For men to provide for themselves a suitable place wherein to worship God ought not to be considered in itself any

more really a Christian enterprise than for them to provide for themselves a place wherein they can eat and sleep, or a place wherein they can mingle with their exclusive friends in social intercourse and amusement.

Nor is this all. Many church people, who would scorn to think they had done all of their Christian duty by giving money to their own church, seem to think that they have done all that can be required of them by giving time to the church. To these the end of the Christian life seems to be not merely the maintenance of a beautiful church building, but the maintenance of the conventional institutions of a churchly activity. These go always to the Sunday morning and evening services of their church. They attend its midweek prayer meeting or lecture. They send their children to Sunday School and their young people to its Christian Endeavor Society. They belong to its Men's Club or to its Women's Sewing Circle. They patronize its socials, its entertainments, and its fairs. They expect their hired minister to give all his time and energy to the maintenance of this

little round of ecclesiastical activity, and they estimate the help their church may be in God's kingdom only by the size of its prayer meeting, by the attendance at its social functions, and by the increase of its own membership. But meanwhile, for men to maintain an actively flourishing church may not in itself be any more truly a Christlike activity than for them to maintain a flourishing business or a flourishing lodge or a flourishing club.

The Church at its very best is only a means to an end, never an end in itself. The one end of the Church's existence is the promotion of the religion of Jesus.

If this proposition needed any demonstration the history of the foundation of the church would be sufficient. The Church was established by Christians from motives of expediency and from the felt need for fellowship and collective instruction. It was not organized for the promotion of its own welfare, but to help Christians in the promotion of their Christian living. Historically, the Church, like the Sabbath, was made for man, not man for the Church.

If Christians no longer need the Church to help them to live Christ's life, then the Church has no reason for its continued existence. Surely no church has the right to demand the devotion and homage of the Christian people of the twentieth century just because the Christians of the first century found it advisable and helpful to come together in the public assembly for worship, for instruction, for mutual comfort, and for fraternal fellowship. The Church cannot be considered as divine in its inception and divine in its continued existence apart from its continued helpfulness to men.

And just as the Church itself has no reason for existence apart from its usefulness, so no specialized activity of the Church can be considered necessary which has lost its power of helpfulness. If the prayer meeting cannot be helpful to the promotion of Christian living there is no reason why it should be maintained. If the socials cannot minister to the Christian welfare of men, they should be abandoned. The Church and all customary avenues of the Church's activity are of use only as they have

in themselves the power to inspire men and to help men to live like Christ. The end of these churchly activities is not their own prosperity and liveliness, the end is their service in the promotion of the kingdom of God.

Sec. 3. *The Distinctive Function of the Church*

As has been indicated in the preceding section, it is the one distinctive function of the Church to promote the Christian life,—not only the Christian life of its own constituency but also the Christian life of the community and of the world.

To accomplish this one purpose of its existence, the Church must do more than to furnish a form of worship which shall be pleasing to its own members. It must furnish a worship that shall be vital and strengthening. The worship must be nutritious. It must be in the nature of spiritual food which the worshipers can assimilate and digest, and which shall strengthen them for the toils and trials and temptations of their daily life. It is the object of the Church not merely to bring its members to worship God,

but through their worship to strengthen them for the service of men.

The Church must do more than to teach theological truths and to expound Biblical passages. It must apply the truths to the present needs, not only of the listening congregation, but of society at large to which this one congregation must minister. It must not, then, be content with teaching the truth, it must inspire righteousness. It must send men out of the Church, not merely saying, "How true this is which I have heard to-day" but saying, "How imperative it is that I should try to do what I have heard this day." It is not the function of the Church to make men believe, but to make them do.

The Church must do more than to equip gymnasiums and maintain industrial bureaus. It must do more than to establish evening schools and to provide secular instruction. It must do more even than to convert its assembly rooms into clinics, and to advertise to cure the sick either by faith or by hypnotism, or by the vaunted knowledge of the nothingness of matter

and the allness of mind. All these physiological, industrial and intellectual activities are, indeed, Christian activities, but they can best be performed by agencies wholly divorced from the Church, by those men who are free from all possible charge of narrow denominationalism, by those who have been specially trained for these specific parts of a truly Christian ministry. But the Church must do more than these inasmuch as the source and the inspiration of any movement are more than the movement itself. The Church must inspire men to do under these other Christian agencies this needed work of ministry to others. It is not the function of the Church to usurp the work of its industrial and social allies in the promotion of God's Kingdom, but so to interpret the religion of Jesus and so to apply it to present conditions as to inspire men to work with and through these allies for the betterment of mankind.

The Church must do more than to purify politics, to enforce law, or to cleanse municipalities. The Church cannot be a political power, not even a political purifying power.

The union of the State with the Church worked disastrously for both. The assumption by the Church of the functions of the State must always end in disaster. But again, the Church must do more than this in that the Church must inculcate such a love for purity and righteousness and such a hatred for vice and sin as shall send men out from the Church on fire with the righteous indignation of avenging angels. With the "sword of the spirit" and with the "breastplate of righteousness," the Church must equip the soldiers of the army of God who, under the flag of patriotic citizenship, must fight the manifold forms of evil in both municipality and nation; aye, and who will fight until the victory of God is won.

It follows, finally, that the Church must do more than to seek to increase its roll of members. The end of the Church's existence is not to make church members but to make working, helpful Christians. Instead of being content to get men into the Church, the Church must be satisfied only when it sends men out from the Church to serve other men.

To interpret the religion of Jesus and to apply that religion to present conditions and to present needs; to inspire men to live Christ's religion, to do in the world the work of ministry to the needy and of salvation to the sinful,—to do the same kind of work to-day which Jesus did in the first century in Judea and Galilee;—this is the one essential function of the Christian church. If it is doing this work, its denominational name is of little interest, its professed theology of little concern, its accepted ritual an immaterial matter. If it is not doing this work, no power of Pope or of Synod, of presbytery or of episcopacy, can save it from its deserved fate of annihilation.

Observers differ as to the real helpfulness of the present Christian Church. Some writers are marshaling the statistics of church membership and of church attendance, and from these they are making the deduction that the Church is declining in power and in influence. Such statistics are utterly worthless, and the conclusions drawn from them must be considered null and void; for the value of any

church,—its real value to the Kingdom of God,—is to be measured not by the size of its membership or of its weekly congregations, but by the extent of its influence in the world. How many men are being inspired in the Church and by the Church to live useful lives, to be faithful and helpful in their homes, honest and industrious in their business, clean and patriotic in their citizenship, kind and patient in their friendship, thoughtful and generous in their benevolence? These statistics are not at hand. But so long as one man has been helped by the Church to be a better man, the Church has justified its existence. And the Church which has helped any can help all.

Sec. 4. *The Assistance of Church Membership*

Let us see now more in detail just what the Christian needs from a church. Since historically there were Christians before there was any church at all, logically it follows that there may be Christians outside the Church. Christians, then, do not need the Church as a basis

of their Christianity. No man can become a Christian simply by joining a church, and no church can justly claim that those not in its membership are therefore not Christians. A man is a Christian first, because he is trying to be actuated by the spirit of Christ. He may become a church member afterwards, because through the organization of the Church he believes he can best confess his Christian purpose and assist in Christian activity.

The fundamental assistance of church membership to the Christian is this: the Church in its purity offers to the individual Christian the means of public confession; it offers, too, the assistance of a mutual encouragement, and the opportunity for united effort. Since no man who is a social being can live any phase of his life alone, he cannot expect to live his Christian life alone. If he is really Christlike, he will try to make others more Christlike. If he is soundly logical, he will perceive that he can do this best in fellowship with others who are actuated by like motives.

But which one of the various churches shall the Christian select as most helpful to himself? Unfortunately he has not perfect freedom of choice. The insistence of churches upon the acceptance of a detailed theology has excluded many an earnest Christian from their helpful fellowship, and the standard of membership must be modified before many Christian men of intellectual candor can honestly unite with the Church. No church should demand as its basis of membership anything other than a declaration of Christian purpose and an assent to a simple covenant, promising personal allegiance to the church and brotherly regard for all its members. If all churches should agree in demanding this, and this only, the much desired day of church unity would be at hand. So long as churches insist upon particular interpretations of dogma, so long will the day of union be delayed. The Church in its essence belongs rightly to all Christians, whatever may be their different interpretations of theological doctrine. But we must bring the Church back to the original purity

of that assembly in the upper room at Jerusalem before we can expect it to be to Christians all that ideally it should be.

Yet no Christian should refrain from joining the Church because he fancies some of its members may be narrow bigots. Among the great variety of churches offered, it would seem that every man ought to find some one wherein he can conscientiously hope to advance the Kingdom of God upon the earth, and through whose organization he can do Christlike work shoulder to shoulder with his fellows. There is an avowed sensitiveness concerning church creeds and dogmas which sometimes amounts to an excuse for the neglect of duty. Granted that the churches of the day need purification, granted that the most of them cling too closely to the traditions of men and do not follow closely enough the spirit of Jesus, the best way to purify the Church is not to stand outside to criticise but to go in to cleanse.

The strong, broad-minded Christians who are trying to live their life outside the Church could do much to make the Church what it

ought to be if they only would. The Church needs them, and they need the Church. The Church needs the help and the personal allegiance of all Christians in its efforts to Christianize the world. All Christians need the Church in their efforts to follow Christ. Organization gives power. Public confession generates personal responsibility. Fellowship brings courage and strength. These things the Church can give to the Christian. All these the Christian needs if he is really to live the Christlike life.

Sec. 5. *The Value of Public Worship*

When a biographer of Robert Louis Stevenson said of that illustrious author that "he was too broad to worship God within the narrow confines of any church edifice," he did not mean his readers to infer that Mr. Stevenson was irreligious. Indeed, quite the contrary. The writer meant in substance to assert that to Mr. Stevenson religious worship seemed something too sublime and too divine to be confined within the doors of human workman-

ship, something too personal and too private to be paraded in public, something which in its nature was too exclusively a matter between God and the individual to be shared with any other human being. The writer would have us believe that in order to preserve the sublimity of his religion as well as to preserve his own independence, Mr. Stevenson went "alone into the woods to worship God," and refused to worship with his fellow men in some church edifice.

The genuineness of Mr. Stevenson's religious nature is not here called in question. There may be some natures who do not feel the need *for themselves* of participation in any form of public worship, but no man can live his Christian life only for himself. A genuinely religious man may find all he needs to receive from worship in the woods alone with God, but the truly Christian man cannot expect to give all that he ought in worship except in the public assembly. The fundamental helpfulness of private worship is to get from God. An added helpfulness in public worship is to give to men.

True worship has its social as well as its personal value. It is, indeed, first of all a matter between the individual soul and God, but just because it is that, it becomes therefore a matter between the individual soul and other souls. The closer one comes to the divine love, the more will one's heart be filled with human love. If, indeed, the Christian by worship comes near to God, he therefore by the same act comes nearer to all his fellows.

Hence the value of public worship, not that men should be "heard for their much speaking," or reverenced either for their many prayers or for their pious genufleetions; but that the worshipful heart of the individual may communicate something of its worshipful spirit to his neighbor, and that the soul aspiring to God may help by its own aspiration to bear some other soul nearer to Him.

When a man looks for the first time at the sublimity of the great Falls of Niagara, or when he but witnesses an unusually glorious sunset, if he be a man who has known human love, he wishes that his loved one might stand

at his side to share with him the inspiration of the moment. If that loved one be by his side, then the two sympathetic souls are drawn closer together by this experience of their mutual adoration of the sublime.

So when the soul looks upward to God, there should naturally follow the wish for human companionship. If the friend be by the side of the worshiper, the two are drawn closer together in their human love by this act of their aspiration for the divine. There may be some pathetically lonely souls who prefer to stand without human companionship in the presence of the manifestations of God. But these are they who know nothing of the inevitable human overflow of the true worship of the divine.

One could wish that Mr. Stevenson had been able to discern that the public worshipers of God were not bound by the narrow walls of the church edifice, but by the natural ties of similar aims and of common purposes. Had he discerned this, he might have been able to help others by sharing with them his religious

aspirations, just as he helped so many by sharing with them his literary genius.

To help others, this is the fundamental aim of the Christian, and he must not lose sight of this aim in his worship of God any more than in his more direct service for men. The most valuable assistance which the Church has yet been able to give to the Christian has been the assistance of public worship. Wherever the element of public worship has been minimized in the Church, there the helpfulness of the Church has been most meager. Should this function of the Church's activity conceivably be omitted altogether, it is as well conceivable that the Church would soon cease to exist.

We must, of course, leave the particular form of public worship to the choice of the individual. He will be guided to his choice by youthful training and by present environment. He may be influenced by the limitations of opportunity, and by the demands of expediency. Insistence upon any form should not be a matter of conscience to any follower of him

who taught that not "in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem" but "in spirit and in truth," should men worship the Father who is a Spirit.

The Christian who is not unduly stiff or unsympathetically prejudiced ought to be able to worship not only alone in the woods, but also in whatever place and in whatever way he may find his brethren honestly striving to worship the Father of all mankind. When thus he tries to embody in form or in ritual the sincere spirit of the true worshiper, he will always find help. He will find help for himself because the act of worship will bring him out of himself and into a closer touch with the infinite God. But, what is of more consequence, he will also find the usefulness of his Christian life increased by the overflow from his act of worship which will touch with helpful sympathy and uplifting power the hearts of all who worship with him.

The essential Christian Church is the assembly of all those who in their worship would seek to help others as well as themselves. It is the

organization of those who, by the public profession of their Christian purpose and by the mutual participation of their Christian service, try to minister to others in the spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER SIXTH

What is the Essential Christian Activity?

Sec. 1. *Christianity and Personal Salvation*

FAVORITE word often upon the lips of the Great Teacher of the Christian religion was the word "Watch." He bade his hearers watch, for they knew "neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 25: 13.) He enjoined the spirit of vigilance upon his disciples, whose weary bodies would not let them watch with him for one hour. They were to watch, "that they enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26:41.)

It seems evident from these and other similar instructions of Jesus that in his mind vigilance was one of the requisite modes of true Christian activity. It was not merely a vigilance imposed by the possible unexpectedness of

death, but a vigilance imposed by the exigencies of life.

We are very wrong if we think his parable of the ten virgins had reference only to the coming of the angel of death. The Bridegroom does not come only to take men out of the world, but also to fit them to live in the world. Christians are not just to watch that they may be ready to go to heaven when they die; they are to watch that they may be ready to make this world more like heaven while they live.

The Bridegroom is the opportunity for service. The opportunity comes at the most unexpected moment. Sometimes, therefore, it finds men ready, and sometimes unready. Some have supplied the lamps of their personalities with the equipment which enables them to grasp the opportunity; and some dillydallying, lackadaisical souls have neglected to provide the necessary personal equipment, indulging the fond and futile hope that they can grasp the opportunity and shine in the world with no need of a costly and painstaking preparation.

The figure of the parable thus understood

clearly interprets the significance of Christ's command to watch, and becomes most suggestive to us in our attempt to understand the nature of real and efficient Christian activity. The watchfulness necessary in the Christian is the preparedness of personal development. It is not enough for the Christian to have good intentions; he must fit himself for the accomplishment of good intentions. Neither to mean to keep from evil nor to mean to do good will make one a strong and active Christian; only a preparedness to resist the evil and a readiness to embrace the good will make his professed Christianity really worth while. Both according to Christ's teaching and according to the experience of the human race, every true man must be prepared for two emergencies: on the one hand he must be ready to meet the temptation to do evil, and on the other he must be ready for the opportunities to do good. He must watch for the coming both of the "devil" and of the "Son of man." The "devil" comes to him as an angel of light, wearing many and varying guises of allurement. The "Son of

man" comes to him in the person of every needy soul whom he ought to help and whom he might help if he were only ready.

Therefore it is a part of the true Christian activity for every man to see that the lamp of his own personality is fully equipped. He must make and keep himself as strong physically as it is possible for him to be. He must observe the laws of health and of hygiene. He must exercise in the open air. He must be not merely a total abstainer from some things, but temperate in his use of all things. He may need every ounce of his possible physical strength some day to resist a strong temptation or to rescue a neighbor from danger. Aye, he needs his strength every day to meet the daily temptations and to help him to bear the trials and to perform the duties of his every-day life.

The Christian, too, must cultivate his mind. He must not only study the thoughts of others; he must learn to think for himself. He should be clearly sure of his own position upon all questions of domestic, industrial, social, po-

litical, and religious importance. He must be able "to give a reason for the faith that is in him." This, too, because a clear mind is one of the best defenses against the insidious suggestions of evil, and because by his clear thinking he will always be ready for the opportunity to illuminate the pathway of his questioning, doubting, despairing friend.

Also, the true Christian must attend to the distinctively spiritual equipment of his personality. He must use the means of spiritual exercise which are the most beneficial to himself, whether that exercise consists for the most part in private prayer and personal devotions or whether it be found in the more energetic wrestlings with the powers of evil. He must keep his own "conscience void of offense towards God," for thus only will he be able to withstand the "fiery darts of the evil," and thus only will he win the confidence of those men in need whom he must be ever ready to help.

All these are distinctly personal equipments. They are things which every man must get

for himself or go without. The wise virgins did not give to their foolish sisters because they were contemptibly stingy, but because they were unable to give what was required. "You can drive a horse to water but you cannot make him drink." You can tell the youth the underlying principles of health and strength, but you cannot give him a strong body. You may show him the way of knowledge, but you cannot make him learned. You may expound to men moral and religious precepts, but the men will continue immoral and irreligious so long as they will. There are some things which every man must "go and buy" for himself; and the cost price of these things must be paid in the hard coin of one's own personal experiences.

So there is a true sense in which some of the activity of the Christian is concerned only with himself. And here is the excuse for preachers' continued insistence upon the necessity of personal salvation. Define personal salvation as personal equipment for service; describe the method of its attainment as that

spirit of watchfulness which seeks to be always prepared; remember that the end of the salvation is not merely heaven for one's self, but heaven for others; and we have before us the true relation of the Christian's personal salvation to the vital Christian activity. To watch with every fortification of defense guarded that he may not fall into temptation; to watch with every implement of service prepared for instant use that he may be ready for the opportunity of helpfulness:—this must always be done by the man who would take his part in the activity of the religion of Jesus.

Sec. 2. *Christianity and Personal Sacrifice*

Most Christian teachers have agreed that all truly Christian activity must involve some personal sacrifice. But agreeing in the necessity of the sacrifice they have disagreed both as to its purpose and nature.

The purpose of the sacrifice has sometimes been taught as the propitiation of God. This was apparently the purpose sought by the children of Israel in their sacrifices of the first

fruits of the harvest and of the best animals of the flocks and herds. The underlying idea of these "burnt offerings" seems to have been not merely to show their gratitude to God for past favors, but to insure his continued benevolence. The God of the people of the Exodus was conceived as a jealous God. That He might not turn away His face in anger, these uninstructed slaves offered Him the best of their possessions.

It would be unnecessary in this enlightened age to speak of this mistaken conception of the purpose of sacrifice were there not so many evidences of the persistence of the crude idea even in the minds of those who supposedly have learned something of the true nature of God's love from Christ himself. There are some Christian people whose whole religious activity seems to partake of this nature of a propitiatory sacrifice. They go to church because they feel that church attendance will be pleasing to God. They abstain from certain amusements and self-indulgences because their self-denials will win God's approval. They

give their money to charities and to benevolences, not always because they want to help these worthy and needy causes, but sometimes because in some way they believe their gifts will win them divine favor, or, in their own vernacular, "bring them good luck."

The reason that none of these so-called sacrifices can be called true Christian activity is because they all arise from a spirit of selfishness. When one denies himself some present desire for something in the future which he believes will be more desirable, we rightly call him prudent, but such selfish prudence does not entitle him to the holy name of Christian. All self-denials for the purpose of winning God's favor must be catalogued only under the head of deeds of prudence. If the children of Israel believed that God's favor was worth keeping, and that it could not be continued in their behalf without the sacrifice of rams and bullocks, they did wisely to offer the sacrifices. If a professed Christian to-day believes that God's favor is worth preserving and that he cannot keep it unless he gives up

playing games of chance, he would be very foolish and imprudent not to make the required self-denial. If he would rather go to heaven when he dies than to go to horse races while he lives, and if he honestly thinks he cannot do both, he is wise in choosing that which he more earnestly desires. But let not this selfish prudence of his be ennobled by the name of Christian sacrifice. The purpose of that sacrifice which is really a part of vital Christian activity cannot be to win anything for one's self, not even the favor of God or the eternal bliss of heaven.

Again, strange as it may seem, the purpose of some personal sacrifices that have been dignified by the name of Christian, have their real, though not apparent purpose, in the propitiation of men. Many a Christian man has limited his freedom, both of thought and of action, to meet the demands of some hard-shelled, narrow-minded fanatics who have mistaken their own prejudiced notions for the eternal decrees of God. It is true that the apostle Paul enjoined a loving thought for the

"weaker brother" but he did not recommend a timorous bondage to the religious bigot. When one refrains from doing anything concerning which he has freedom of choice and action for fear some of his friends may misunderstand and disapprove, he is certainly acting within his rights. If he prefers the good opinion of these friends to the exercise of his liberty in certain directions, let him make the choice according to his preference. But let him not believe that he is any better Christian for this self-denial. No self-denial which seeks only the approval of men can be included in the sacrifices that partake of the nature of real Christian activity.

The sacrifice involved in the necessary activity of the Christian is the sacrifice demanded by love for the purpose of helping someone else. Just as Jesus did not ascend Calvary to win God's favor or to meet with the approval of men, so the true sacrifice of the Christian must be purged from all self-seeking motives.

The nature of the sacrifice that is Christlike is not merely a self-denial, it is a self-impartation.

Christians are not just to deny themselves something now for some future good by and by, they are to give something of themselves to others. Christian sacrifice is the natural expression of love. The man who has not learned to love can know nothing of sacrifice. He who really does love need not worry about the hardness of the sacrifice, for to him the sacrifice will be natural and easy.

It is a great mistake to talk to the would-be Christian of Christianity's cost in terms of sacrifice. It is like trying to compel him to understand a page of the Hebrew Bible before he has learned even the Hebrew alphabet. Teach the youthful student of Christianity first the alphabet of love. Show him the wonderful love of God. Picture to him the needs of God's loved children whom he can help. Be gentle and patient with him until he can apply the lesson in simple deeds of kindness and mercy. And lo, almost before he knows it, he has come to express himself naturally in the terms of Christian sacrifice.

No man can be a truly active Christian who

does not give of himself to make others better. He may make the sacrifice in many different ways. Something of himself he may give as he offers the money which is the product of his industry. Something of himself he may give in the surrender of the self-indulgence which to him would be pleasing. Something of himself he may bestow in the unselfish use of his time and in the thoughtful, benevolent expenditure of his energy. Whoever gives of himself in anyway for the good of his neighbor is engaged in the activity which is truly Christian.

"Who gives of himself with his gift feeds three—
Himself, his hungering neighbor and me."

Sec. 3. *Christianity and Philanthropy*

Some thinkers have found the complete description of the Christian life as taught by Jesus to lie in the parable of the Good Samaritan. These have sometimes read into the parable not only the commendation of acts of sympathetic service, but also the condemnation of all forms of professed personal religion. Jesus

did not bid the inquiring lawyer to imitate the priest and the Levite, but to go and do like the Samaritan. Therefore, it is argued, he meant to imply that Christians were not to be avowed religionists at all, but only helpful philanthropists.

The century in which we are now living, as has already been remarked in a preceding connection, is one in which this philanthropic conception of Christianity is especially predominant. Everywhere about us we find men who openly claim to have little regard for professed Christianity, but who give much time, money and thought to specific forms of philanthropic and charitable endeavor. Hospitals and institutions for the blind, the deaf and the dumb; schools, colleges, libraries, reading rooms and gymnasiums; homes for the aged, the destitute and the fallen; orphanages, social settlements and city missions;—these are only a few of the many enterprises for the betterment of humanity which receive the generous support of thousands of people who do not profess to be Christians at all.

To all these home institutions of salvation we must also add to-day the evidence of an increasing interest in foreign missions, and it must be remembered that the increase of interest in missions is manifestly due to the somewhat recent change in the motive of missions. So long as missionaries sought only to rescue heathen from an eternal hell they received little encouragement from practical philanthropists; but when the missionaries avowed their purpose to fit heathen people for a healthy, intelligent, serviceable life on the earth, philanthropists began to rally to their support.

There should be little need here to discuss the question of the exact identity of philanthropy and Christianity. Christianity has to do with all of a man's life; philanthropy with that part of his life which is associated with his fellows. Christianity concerns itself with the man's relation to his God as well as to his fellow man, and with his relation to himself as well as to either. If there were only one man upon the face of the earth, that man conceivably could

still be a Christian though obviously he could not be a philanthropist. He could try to be actuated by the spirit of him who overcame temptations alone in the wilderness and who communed with his Father alone on the mountain side, even though he could not undertake a ministry for his fellow men. But this is imaginary. So long as there is more than one man upon the face of the earth, no one can call himself a true Christian unless like Christ he loves and serves his brethren. Jesus in the parable did not condemn all profession of religion, but only its selfish and formal profession.

Had the Levite ministered to the destitute and wounded traveler, he would doubtless have been commended as was the Samaritan. Elsewhere Jesus emphatically enforced the need of a public profession of religion (vide Matt. 10:32, 33) and the only time when he described the whole Christian life, he clothed his description in the two commandments, of which love to man was the subject only of the second. The first was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

The second was like to it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Mark 12: 30, 31.) Philanthropy, then, must be considered not as identical with Christianity, but as the inevitable expression of Christianity in human relationship. We must consider the deed of the Good Samaritan as essentially a Christlike deed, and we must consider the multitude of organized forms of charities and missions as so many opportunities for the true Christian to express his Christianity in human terms. Philanthropy is the human language of that religion which in its essence is divine. Just as one's inner thoughts can be expressed outwardly only by words and signs, so one's inner relations with the God of love and a Christlike spirit can be expressed outwardly only in the human language of philanthropy.

Sec. 4. *The Quest for the Kingdom of God*

When Jesus taught his hearers to seek first the Kingdom of God, he made it very clear that the primary activity of the Christian life had its relation to the service of God as King.

Unfortunately, however, he did not in this instance so clearly define the nature of God's Kingdom as to preclude all possibility of misunderstanding. Thus, though Christians have agreed that the work of Christians is to promote God's Kingdom, they have not always agreed as to precisely what work will best promote it.

Some have interpreted the Kingdom of God to have reference only to a future state of existence. They have made the term synonymous with the kingdom of heaven, understanding heaven to signify the spiritual happiness of those who have been emancipated from earthly limitations. To these, to seek the Kingdom of God has meant only to seek heaven. By logical inference, according to this interpretation no man can be a citizen of God's Kingdom until after he has died. All, therefore, that he needs to do in this state of his existence is to fit himself and others for *post-mortem* citizenship. Much as the boy in school theoretically devotes himself to the preparation for citizenship in his country, so men

in this life are to devote themselves only to preparation for the life to come. The earthly activity of the Christian is thus conceived in its last analysis to be unsocial. If he acknowledges any responsibility for the society in which he now lives, it is not a responsibility to make the present society better, but only to make the present members of society more fit for a future existence.

But while no careful student of the teachings of Christ can fail to recognize that he suggested more or less definitely a future life, the unprejudiced student will observe that the picture of God's Kingdom in heaven is at best very dimly outlined, while the conception of God's Kingdom upon the earth stands out in boldest relief.

Christ's picture of God's Kingdom is one picture. There are not two kingdoms of God, one here and one there. But the Kingdom here, which constitutes the foreground of the picture, insensibly becomes merged into the more obscure but perhaps more beautiful lines of the distant Kingdom beyond. The true per-

spective of Christ's teachings makes the Kingdom of God upon the earth of primary importance, though one who views the whole of his teachings will catch something of the glory dimly outlined in the background beyond the distant hills.

With this picture of Christ before us, we must not say that a Christian shall be engaged principally in the preparation either of himself or of his fellows for heaven. But, on the other hand, we must not forbid him to be interested in that which assuredly was a part of Christ's teachings. We can neither bid the Christian to spurn earthly conditions while he seeks heaven, nor to forget heavenly conditions while he works upon the earth. It must be the one object of the Christian's activity to harmonize the earthly with the heavenly. He must strive so skilfully to blend the two that no man can say, "Here earth ends and there begins heaven," but so that all will say, "We cannot tell where earthly conditions cease, for truly the glory of heaven itself has filled the earth."

This is the ideal state for which the true Christian must toil, the state of a heaven-like earth. The true Christian will strive for heaven, but not merely for a future heaven. He will strive for a present heaven. He will strive to fulfill the petition which the Savior himself taught, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done upon the earth as it is in heaven."

It follows, therefore, that the Christian will be necessarily interested in everything that pertains to earthly conditions. He will work for individuals, because individuals are a part of society, and because each individual is a brother subject of his King. He will be interested in all that concerns the individual, ministering to his body as well as to his soul, promoting his intellectual welfare as well as his spiritual welfare, serving him on weekdays as well as on Sundays, by an honest day's toil as well as by a religious testimony, in the workshop at the time of business as well as in the church at the hour of worship. Especially will he be interested in that individual who is most in need. He will help the man in need

according to his ability, rejoicing if he can but "give a cup of cold water" in the spirit of a disciple of Jesus.

But the Christian, too, will be interested in the larger problems of the body of God's children in their relations to each other. He will not rest content so long as evil social conditions remain unrighted. He will lift his voice in indignant protest against all forms of legalized injustice and iniquity. He will exercise his rights of civil citizenship as one who is as well a citizen of the Kingdom divine. He will strive so far as in him lies to guard the sanctity of the home, to preserve from selfish, political encroachments the interests of the school, to maintain the purity of the Church, and to promote the best Christian welfare of the State. His work will be for society as well as for the individual, and his work will not be complete until all men have become one in Christ even as Christ was one with God.

By the exercise of a dauntless courage and of a patient sympathy, by exhortation and by admonition, by precept and by example, the Christian

will strive to make this world the Kingdom of his Lord and Savior. And striving for God's Kingdom here, he will open the doors of heaven eternal, both for himself and for those over whom God may have given him influence.

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